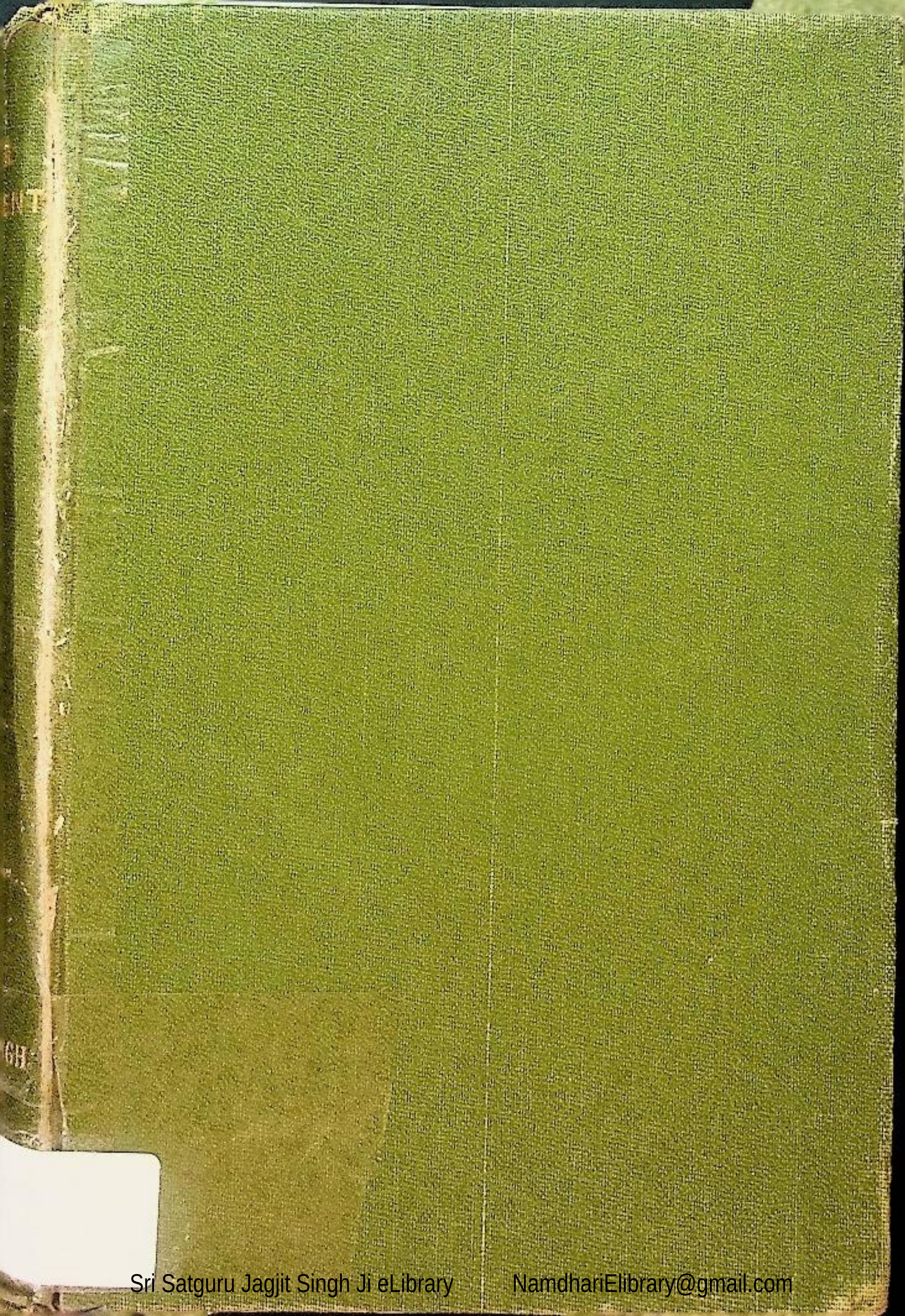
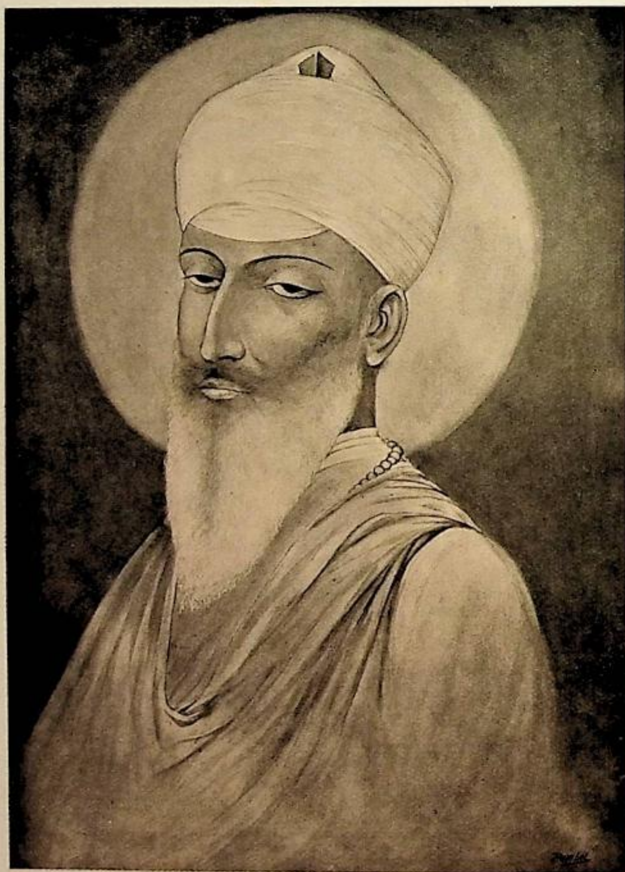


Punjab History Forum Series No. 1.

KUKA MOVEMENT



BABA RAM SINGH,
Guru of the Kukas

KUKA MOVEMENT

An important phase in Punjab's role in India's struggle for freedom

By
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Dedicated To
Pioneers and Martyrs
of the Kuka Movement

FOREWORD

THE establishment of British power in India was a long and protracted process and was possible mainly because of the two factors. The Industrial Revolution, which followed in the wake of scientific advance of the West, had given the British a superior technology. This was reflected not only in a better quality of armaments but also in superior organisation and use of manpower. The increasing prosperity of Europe also led to an improvement in the quality of the individual and as a result the average European then showed a greater degree of enterprise, initiative and self-confidence than his Indian counterpart.

The second factor responsible for the success of the British was the Indian failure to present a united front. There were regional and religious differences and rivalries. In the same region and within the same community, people were divided against one another and more often than not one party helped the British to defeat the other. It is true that the British had superior technology and better organisation, but even then, without widespread Indian support, it would have been almost impossible for them to establish their domination over such a vast country.

It took the British over a hundred years to consolidate their power in India. During this period there were many and repeated attempts by individuals and groups to challenge their domination. These challenges failed because of the two factors mentioned above, but nevertheless each attempt to oppose the spreading British influence left in its wake islands of resistance in different parts of the country. Every time a revolt or

uprising was put down, the British took measures of extreme repression. This often demoralised the masses, but its effect on the more militant sections was to make them even more determined in their opposition to foreign rule.

The great revolt of 1857 was the last large organised effort to overthrow British power, but it also failed because of internal dissensions and weak leadership. The issues were not correctly chosen. Except for parts of Oudh, it was largely a rebellion of the feudal elements who sought to restore their old social, political and military power. Again, except in Oudh, the mass of people did not respond as they had little love for feudal elements which had oppressed them for generations. The newly rising middle classes were attracted by the scientific advance of the West and its industrial prosperity and remained aloof. Without the backing of the masses and the intellectual classes, the revolt was perhaps foredoomed. Intrusion of religious elements was also a cause of ultimate defeat. The Emperor Bahadur Shah was chosen as the symbol of revolt, but he was an old man long past his prime and could not give the movement the energetic and forward-looking leadership which alone could have led to success.

Even after the revolt of 1857, pockets of resistance remained throughout the country and found expression in local movements. One of the most interesting of such efforts to expel the British was the Kuka Movement initiated by Bhai Ram Singh. He was a simple peasant, but had great personal qualities which attracted the loyalty and allegiance of large sections of people in the Punjab. It was said that his coming had been foretold in Sikh prophecies and his followers claimed that he was an incarnation of Guru Gobind Singh. A man of the people, Bhai Ram Singh knew of the hardships and suffering of the ordinary peasant and based his movement on a redress of their grievances. He had served

as a soldier in the Sikh Army and had been influenced by the idea of Sikh dominion over the Punjab. With his deep insight into human character, he realised that neither political liberation nor social and economic upliftment would be possible without an improvement in the quality of the individual. He therefore placed great stress on moral qualities and sought to inculcate in his followers a spirit of religious devotion and service.

Within a few years Bhai Ram Singh developed into Guru Ram Singh with a considerable following in Ludhiana and adjoining areas. His ultimate aim was wide and he had visions of the return of the days of Sikh power in North-West India. A great socio-economic and political movement was, however, deflected from its major objective by its attachment to minor religious practices. It is unfortunate that the first expression of the movement was an attack on the butchers of Amritsar which was followed by a similar attack in Raikot. The Government reacted by executing some Kukas and imposing restrictions on the movement of Guru Ram Singh. A more serious development was the Kuka attack on Maler Kotla which led to savage reprisal by the Government. In fact, the action of local officers was so severe that the Central Government felt it necessary to punish some of them. The Government did not, however, wish to take any chances and Guru Ram Singh was exiled to Burma.

The movement suffered a severe setback, but it must be said to the credit of the Kukas that they were not easily deflected from their political aims. They tried to establish contacts with Indian rulers and made attempts secretly to enter the armed forces of Kashmir and Nepal. There were even attempts to establish contacts with Russia and some Kuka leaders showed great courage and daring in undertaking perilous journeys for securing Russian help. During this period, the political character of the movement became more

dominant, but its character as a movement for social and moral reform was never lost.

It is true that the Kuka Movement did not succeed, but nevertheless it left a permanent impression on a large section of the Sikhs. The insistence of Guru Ram Singh on self-help helped in developing among them their system of justice and communication. This was a considerable achievement in view of the prevailing circumstances. Even more remarkable was the Kuka insistence on growth of indigenous agriculture and trade. In some respects, Guru Ram Singh had anticipated the non-cooperation movement of 1921 in his idea of boycott of British institutions in the country. It is also claimed that the Kuka movement directly influenced the Ghadar and other political movements in the Punjab in early twentieth century.

I have read with great interest Dr. Fauja Singh's study of the Kuka Movement. He has collected a great deal of material and gone to the original sources in formulating his views. By and large, his assessment is fair and objective and his book will be a valuable contribution to the literature of national movements in India during the nineteenth century. I would like to congratulate him for throwing new light on many aspects of an important movement which till now was not fully known outside the circle of its immediate adherents.

New Delhi. Humayun Kabir

October 8, 1965.

PREFACE

THERE is an urgent need for a dispassionate and objective study of the Kuka Movement. Intensive research work is presently being conducted on the whole gamut of our freedom struggle. It is only fit and proper that the pioneers of the freedom struggle, such as the Kukas, should be paid due attention. Several books, mostly in Punjabi, have been written on them. Some of them are good in so far as they go. But in a broad sense, the Kuka case has been both under-estimated and over-estimated. On the one hand it has been shown to be merely a social and religious movement, while on the other the satyagraha ideas of the subsequent Gandhian period have been projected back into it. To me both appear to be extreme views, and as is often the case, the truth may be found lying somewhere in the intervening area.

The present is a humble attempt to steer clear of the controversial postures and to state things in as objective a manner as possible, at no time losing sight of the perspective relative to the subject. It is not that the work does not suffer from any limitations. Perhaps there are many of them, and no body is more conscious of it than the author himself. But the merit claimed for it is not perfection, but that it may provide a few guiding lines for further work on the subject. Several questions have been posed, for instance : Was the Kuka Movement a purely religious and social affair or was it also a political one ? Did it start with a political aim or did the political aim appear subsequently as the result of its persecution by the Government? How far is it correct that the Sikhs helped the British in 1857 ? Was there no anti-British feeling among them at that time ? If

there was such a feeling, why did they not rise ? Why did Baba Ram Singh take no part in the Revolt of 1857, if it be said that he had a political aim from the very beginning ? Was the Kuka campaign against cow-killing merely part of their religious programme or was it a device to rouse the people in a rebellion against the kine-killing and beef-eating "malechh" rulers ? Were the Kuka attacks on Malodh and Maler Kotla isolated acts of madness on the part of a few fanatics or the beginning of a general Kuka rising against the Government ? How far were the Punjab Government and its officials right in characterising the Kuka attacks as an incipient rebellion ? Why were Cowan and Forsyth penalised ? Was it out of any feeling of spmpathy for the Kuka sufferers or for some narrow administrative reason ? What was the impact of the executions and detentions of 1872 on the Kuka Movement ? What kind of relations did the Kukas try to build up with some states, Indian and foreign ? And finally, what was their conception of freedom and what was their role in the national movement of the country as a whole ? An attempt has been made to find answers to all these and many other questions, though it is not at all claimed that the last word has been said on them.

There are several other aspects which could have been profitably pursued but for some personal preoccupations had to be left out for the time being. Two of the most important of them are : (i) the impingement of the quick economic changes that were taking place at this time ; (ii) the circumstances under which the popular movements of Hazru and Naurangabad sprang into existence and the general tendencies of their working, both before and after the introduction of British rule in the Punjab. Unless these mysteries are satisfactorily unravelled, it will not be possible to have a reasonably accurate idea of the genesis of Baba Ram Singh's movement. As it is, the purpose of this book will have been served, if it is found helpful in any form or to any extent in advanc-

ing the understanding of the Kuka Movement or in promoting further research on the subject.

The work has been based, as far as possible, on the original source material preserved in the National Archives of India. The Kukas of the period under study could not and did not, for reasons of secrecy and security, commit anything to writing. So there is no strictly contemporary Kuka account except what is found mixed up in the official records. Fortunately, the subject was taken up subsequently and there are now available a few good works such as '*Satgur Bilas*' of Bhai Santokh Singh and *Shahid Bilas* of Gyani Kala Singh Namdhari. These accounts have been used to explain the Kuka point of view and further, to fill up the gaps of the official records.

I am deeply indebted to Maharaj Nihal Singh, of the illustrious Bhaini family, ex-member of Parliament, for inspiring me to undertake the present study and for helping me in the collection of material for it. But for his help, this book would not have so soon seen the light of day. I am also thankful to S. Harnam Singh Nagi, S. Hazara Singh Gurdaspuri and S. Harbans Singh who took keen interest in the matter and gave several useful suggestions for the further improvement of the work. I am thankful to my old teacher, Dr. Ganda Singh, who so readily helped me with some of the source material which is not available at the National Archives. I am beholden to my friends Dr. M.M. Ahluwalia, Shri M.L. Ahluwalia and S. Gurdial Singh for their going through the typescript and making some valuable suggestions. I shall be failing in my duty, if I do not express my heart-felt thanks to the officials of the research room and library of the National Archives of India. My acknowledgements are also due to the proprietor and staff of the Naya Hindustan Press, Chandni Chowk, Delhi for their excellent work and sweet cooperation. Last but not least is my sincere appreciation

of the assistance I got from my noble wife Surjit and my son Jaspinder Singh.

November 1965.
Delhi.

F.S. Bajwa

CONTENTS

Illustrations

CHAPTER I

KUKA MOVEMENT AND ITS FOUNDER

IT is almost customary with our writers to extol the latter half of the 19th century in the history of our country as a period of renaissance or reformation or both. This is mainly for the reason that there emerged during this period a large number of movements which exercised far-reaching influence on the modernisation of our complex social fabric. They were not confined to any single community, but had within the orbit of their influence nearly all important sections of the Indian population. Among the Hindus there were the Brahmo Smaj (which had originated earlier, but reached its climax only after 1860), Prarthana Smaj, Arya Smaj, Ramakrishna Mission and the Theosophical Movement, some of which are extant even today. The Muslims had the Wahabi and Aligarh Movements. So far as the Sikhs are concerned, there were two well-known movements, the Kuka and the Singh Sabha.

The Kuka Movement, with which we are concerned here, preceded not only the other Sikh movement but, as a matter of fact, almost all other movements mentioned above, with the possible exceptions of the Brahmo Smaj and the Wahabis. But it was not merely among the first to appear; it had what is more important a character of its own, which marked it off from the other movements of the period. Whereas the other movements devoted themselves entirely to social and reform activities, with the main emphasis on re-examination of the prevailing thought and practice in the light of both western impact and rediscovery of the ancient

Indian glory and wisdom with a view to regeneration of the country's social and religious life, the Kuka Movement concentrated on these reforms primarily with the object of preparing the ground for the attainment of a political goal.

The work of the other movements cannot and should not be under-estimated. It was of a fundamental character. They created a re-awakening in the land. They were the leaders of the great enlightenment which set the country on the path of progress. The Kukas, now known as the Namdharis, did participate in this great and much-valued task and their contribution in this respect is worthy of all respect. Even so, it may be remembered that the Kukas, unlike the rest, took an integrated view of the problem facing the country and visualised the various questions, social, religious and political, in their true and proper perspective. To them the programme of social and religious uplift was of basic importance but no less so was the question of freedom. As a matter of fact, the former was considered an essential preparatory work in the cause of political freedom, for the Kukas dreamt of independence from the British yoke, planned for it, devised a technique of struggle, threw themselves zealously into it and showed no faltering in making sacrifices, howsoever great, for it.

Another aspect, which gives the movement of the Kukas a hallmark of distinctiveness, is its exclusive reliance on the indigenous source of inspiration. Ideas from the west, which had been gaining currency in the land for the last so many decades, do not seem to have cast any spell on them. For them the ideas of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh had everything that was necessary to meet the challenge of the times. They had, for instance, the concepts of unity of God, equality of all human beings, fraternity as the basis of all human relations and emancipation of women, besides that of fight against all forms of tyranny, social, religious, eco-

nomic and political, reinforced by a long and deep-rooted tradition of such a fight running through the larger part of the Sikh history. In the presence of this abundant wealth of healthy and wholesome principles of thought and action, the leaders of the Kuka Movement felt little fascination for the ideas from across the seas.

Such an important and interesting movement as that of the Kukas should have been better known and better appreciated. But it appears that its full significance is yet to be realized. This will be possible only when a thorough and objective study of the subject based on the contemporary data of official reports, c.i.d. reports, personal memoirs, judicial proceedings, and non-English sources is attempted. Such a study, to be meaningful and historically valuable, must rise above the prejudices which came into play soon after the emergence of this movement. There was a general tendency of looking askance on it at a time when loyalty to the British Crown was almost the ruling passion of the Indian intelligentsia. But those times are now long past, so that we can now look things straight in the face.

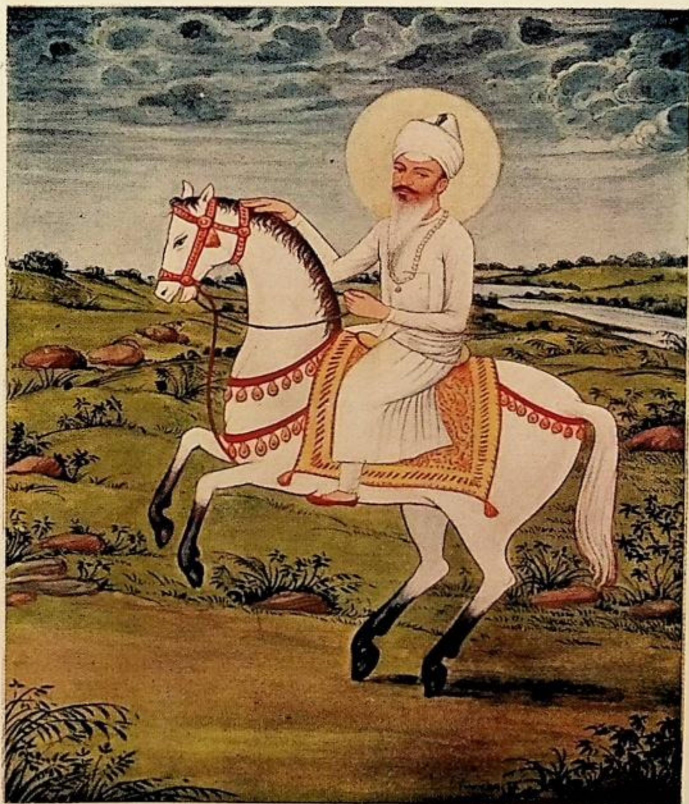
However, for the comparative obscurity of the movement, public prejudices of the late 19th century are not the only explanatory factor. The non-availability of books on the subject is even a more important cause. No doubt, there are quite a few books available in Punjabi, though not all of the requisite standard, but there is hardly any book in English[1], which may enlighten the non-Punjabi-speaking and non-Gurmukhi-reading people of India and the world about the Kukas. There is definitely a need for the production of a standard work collecting and collating all relevant facts and reassessing the role of their movement in the national evolution of Indian people. The sooner it is realized by the scholars of our history, the better it would be.

1. "*Kukas (or Namdharis)—Freedom Fighters of the Panjab*" by Dr. Ahluwalia has since been published, but this scarcely alters the over-all picture.

The founder of this remarkable movement was Baba Ram Singh, a man of great personal charm and magnetism, a seer gifted with many fine qualities of head and heart usually found in leaders of men. He came of a poor carpenter's family of village Bhaini Arayian (now called Bhaini Sahib) of the Ludhiana District. It was a small community of Sikh Jat owner-cultivators, among whom his father Jassa Sigh lived with his wife and three children, quietly administering to the specified requirements of the place. Ram Singh, the eldest of the three children, was born in February 1816 on the night of the Basant Panchami and grew up from childhood to boyhood and then to manhood under the fostering care of his pious and simple-minded parents in the midst of typical rural environments of the earlier part of the 19th century.

Ram Singh, like Sivajee earlier, owed a lot to his mother, Sada Kaur, who nurtured him in the best spirit and traditions of Sikh religion and history. It was from her that he learnt how to read and write Panjabi in the Gurmukhi script and got his first lessons in the love and appreciation of Gurbani, the sacred literature of the Holy Book. The stories from the lives of the Gurus and Bhaktas that she would so often relate to the children, left an indelible mark on his young and impressionable mind. No wonder that he soon became as regular in the daily religious discipline as his mother was.

The first twenty years of Baba Ram Singh's life were spent at Bhaini, his native place, attending to the family business. He was married rather early (as was the prevalent practice then) at the young age of 7 into a family of village Dharaur of the same district. His wife was Jassan who is known as 'Mata' (Mother) Jassan among the Namdharis. The Baba had two daughters, named Nand Kaur and Daya Kaur. Even at this early stage he was marked out as distinct from the generality of the village lads. The author of *Namdhari Itihas*



Founder of Kuka Movement mounted on his favourite Chini mare.

gives a graphic account of his life at this time[1] :

"By the age of 8 years he had memorised several compositions from the Holy Granth and had started reciting them in solitude every morn and eve. By 9 he had started actively assisting the parents in the family work. He would go out into the fields in the company of other village lads to graze cattle. There he would, equally with others, participate in the popular rural games like kabaddi, wrestling etc. The other boys would with gusto recite popular folk songs. The old men present there would give recitations from the love-tales of Hir Ranjha and Mirza Sahiban. But he (Ram Singh), unlike others, would only recite sacred hymns to the accompaniment of some improvised musical instrument. The playmates would laugh at him, while the old men would be lost in wonder. But gradually some of them joined him in the singing of hymns."

When he was about 20, he was prevailed upon by his maternal uncle Kabul Singh, himself a soldier, to get enlisted in the Khalsa army. Entering the military service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1836, he remained in that position till 1845. He was attached to a regiment called after the name of Prince Nau Nihal Singh, a grandson of Ranjit Singh. This period was the most important part of his formative years. The movements of his regiment took him to places far and near all over the state and he came into contact with a much larger number of people, which greatly enriched his experience of men and their affairs. He also now acquired the opportunity of gaining a much more intimate knowledge of the Sikh religion and its literature. With his unmatched religious fervour and spotless character, he soon earned for himself the respected title of Bhai (literally brother, but figuratively one completely soaked in religiousness) and for his regiment the encomium of 'Bhagat' (of saints). A group of like-minded people like Baba

1. Part I, Page 85.

Kahn Singh gathered around him, who later on proved to be the great pillars of the Kuka Movement.

In 1841, while on the way to Peshawar, Ram Singh happened to meet Baba Balak Singh at Hazru in the district of Campbellpur and immediately fell under his spell. Balak Singh, son of one Dial Singh of the village Sarvala in the Attock district, was a renowned saint, who had taken upon himself to lead a ceaseless campaign against the rot that was at the time corroding the Sikh society from within. Ram Singh was deeply impressed with his sense of mission and lost no time in adopting him as his spiritual master. In the words of Ganda Singh, "Baba Balak Singh kindled in the heart of his disciple the light of missionary spirit which later turned into a resplendent flame."[1] The period of service is also noted for having provided Baba Ram Singh with the occasion to observe at close quarters the manner in which the things were going on within the state.

After the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839, the affairs of the Kingdom of Lahore fell into less competent and weak hands. The court factions now came into full play and created an atmosphere of intrigue and counter-intrigue. Political stability was the worst victim and in less than 7 years between the death of the Great Maharaja and the outbreak of the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845, "there were as many as seven changes of government, six of which were accompanied by violence and bloodshed."[2] The rapid cracking up of the state resulted in much administrative and financial chaos in the country and what is still worse, led to the loosening bonds of discipline in the army.

Baba Ram Singh could not tolerate this continuously worsening situation and became a severe critic of the all round deterioration in the standards of public behaviour. At moments, his righteous wrath was so intense and

1. *Kukian di Vithya*, Amritsar, 1946, P. 26.
2. Dr. F.S. Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1964, P. 91.

pronounced that he was warned by his seniors to refrain from this. With his foresight born of a deeper understanding of the laws of nature, he would often predict the fall of the Sikh power at no distant future. The tradition has it that when the First Anglo-Sikh War broke out in 1845, he threw his musket into the Sutlej and went home. He did this, not because he was devoid of patriotism or had no desire for victory over the enemy, but because he was convinced that the requisite conditions of success were utterly lacking. It was to the creation of these conditions that his life henceforth was to be dedicated.

On returning home after leaving the service, Baba Ram Singh took to cultivation in partnership with some of his fellow-villagers, Sukhu and Khema of Bhaini and Jiwan Singh of Arayian, one after the other. His life at this time was both of an ideal farmer and an ideal man. He combined in his daily conduct whole-hearted devotion to God, strict observance of morality in everything done and unstinting industry in his chosen profession. A few instances are told of his truthfulness and honesty. Once his daughter helped herself with 'saag' (greens) from a neighbour's field. She was immediately made to return it. On another occasion, a similar act was committed by one of his cousins. No time was lost in making amends for it.

After about 5 years, Ram Singh opened a small grocery in his native place to cater to the needs of the locality. But this adventure does not seem to have lasted long, because he soon had to leave for Ferozepur to help his cousin, his maternal uncle Hari Singh's son, Khazan Singh, in the supervision of the repairs of the fort and some other buildings there. While at Ferozepur, he made a deep impact on all those who came into contact with him. '*Satguru Bilas*' (Life Story of Baba Ram Singh) gives a graphic account of this. It writes[1] : "All had a

1. Quoted in Nahar Singh, *Namdhari Itihas,* Part I, P. 109.

common mess. The Holy Book was always kept open and recitations from it were continuous. There were both morning and evening services. Asa di Var was a regular morning feature which was attended by all. In the evening there was a community hymn-singing programme conducted to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Guru Ram Singh had his bath in the ambrosial hours of the morning......himself recited Asa di Var......recited Rahiras in the evening and then Arti Sohila and then Ardas (the Sikh Prayer) to God and then would go to bed." This life of prayer and meditation gave rise to certain legends that are still current in that locality. One of them is that when he would be absorbed in the early morning divine meditations, a bright light could be seen perambulating his holy head.

The work at Ferozepur completed, Baba Ram Singh was assigned the task of constructing the bungalow of Dugroo and the serai of Mukatsar, which, too, was skilfully accomplished. He is also credited with having repaired the gurdwara buildings at Mukatsar during his stay there.

In or about 1855 he returned to Bhaini and reopened his grocery there. Among other things, he supplied food grains, cloth and articles of iron to his fellow-villagers. He stuck to this profession right till 1872, when he was arrested and exiled to Burma by the British Government. But the shop was more a means of sustenance than one of getting richer by earning unduly large profits, because there are indications that he simultaneously ran a free kitchen for the visitors, who began to flock to him the more eagerly, the more they heard of his purity, devotion to God and nobility of nature. Later on, when his devotees bugan to bring offerings, he spent them on the community kitchen, meeting his family expenses exclusively out of the sale proceeds of his shop.

But the shop was only a matter of secondary impor-

tance for Baba Ram Singh. His heart was really elsewhere. He was dedicated to religion and pious and honest living. But more than that, he was interested in redeeming the people around him from a dull and barren life of ignorance, superstition and petty self-interests by means of missionary work. The impulse to do so had been accentuated by his frequent visits to his spiritual master, Balak Singh, at Hazru. The last of them is believed to have happened about the beginning of 1857, during which he was commissioned to set about his work in right earnest. Hence in 1857, with a view to preparing them for a struggle against British imperialism, after prolonged and careful deliberations he made up his mind to take the first step in the direction. In the forming of this noble resolve, he was given most valuable assistance by some of his erstwhile colleagues of the Khalsa Army, who had, in the meantime, come to stay with him at Bhaini. Among the most trusted of them was one Baba Kahn Singh, who held the rank of a Havildar in the battalion in which Ram Singh got enrolment and served.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM AND THE REMEDY

BEFORE proceeding to examine the proposed step referred to at the end of the last chapter, it would be both relevant and useful to take a brief notice of the problem facing Baba Ram Singh and the remedy offered by him. It was a multi-dimensional problem, a sort of hydra-headed python, which seemed to defy all solutions; a problem that went to the very roots of the society and had in its embrace questions of varying degrees of complexity. It was at once a religious, a social and a political problem; a problem of ideology, of moral and spiritual values, of character, of healthy and sound channelisation of both individual and social energies and above all, of attitude towards the new rulers and their culture.

Religion is a recognised fundamental social force. This is axiomatic even today. It was much more so in the last century when it had a much firmer grip over the minds of Indians. But in the period we are talking of, it was no longer an agency of good, public or private, being in a state of decadence. The noble teachings of the Sikh Gurus had been either forgotten or were being ignored. No heed was paid to the code of conduct prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. There may be some exceptions here and there, but by and large the people were being misled by the Sodhis and Bedis (inheritors of the Gurus' lineage), who were seriously engaged on setting up gurudoms of their own. Dr. Ganda Singh writing on this aspect says[1] : "Several Sodhis and Bedis had esta-

1. *Kukian di Vithya*, 36.

blished themselves as Gurus at their respective places. Several others were doing the same day after day, whose only object was to get themselves worshipped by more and more followers. All this was contrary to the religion of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and was gradually undermining it."

Besides, the people were falling into the slough of worship of many gods, goddesses, graves, tombs, trees, and snakes. The fetishist worship of Sakhi Sarvar, Nigah, Sheikh Haider, Pir Binoi, Bhairon and Guga in particular was very popular. So were also the visits to and offerings at smadhs, mazars[1] and graves. The priestly classes of the Hindus were extremely active at this time, for it was a golden opportunity for them to exploit the simple minds of the people. There was ever-increasing emphasis on the observance of costly and meaningless rituals. The gurdwaras (temples) of the Sikhs had been converted by their custodians, called Mahants, into their family estates. They were expected to hold up to the commonality specimens of ideal human conduct and living, but actually were far worse than those who visited them to seek spiritual light and consolation. With the vast property and income of the temples at their sole disposal, they fell easy victims to the evils that usually flow from abundance of wealth. A natural outcome of all this was that the people were steeped in ignorance and superstition. Religion as such was no force to inspire, to elevate or to purify, which are and should be, its true functions, but was something which, through stressing the form rather than the spirit, made its votaries bondslaves of formalism. The enslaved human spirit could provide no ideals to guide social and political conduct. In such a state of affairs, it was a real problem to have the right type of leaders. The so-called leaders themselves were low-spirited, engrossed in petty self-interests and clandestine intrigues for self-aggrandisement.

The decadence of religion had adverse repercussions

1. **Smadhs—Hindu tombs; mazars—Muslim tombs.**

on the society. All those grave and shocking evils, from which the Gurus had struggled so hard to save the people, had reappeared in the absence of the true religious and moral values. The women were once again the victims of social tyranny. The very birth of a female child was considered an ill omen and a widespread female infanticide prevailed in the land. Of them, those who were lucky enough to survive were subjected to the inhuman and unnatural practice of child marriage. If unfortunately, these child-brides lost their husbands, they were compelled to immolate themselves on the pyres of their deceased husbands[1]. If they did not want to do so, they were required to undergo the life-long agony of an enforced widowhood. A widow was an object of universal contempt and she deserved no sympathy, nor was any given to her. Women were the virtual cattle who could be, like other cattle, sold or bartered away, for the practices of barter or exchange marriage and of the sale of brides were fairly common among the common people. Among the upper classes, where the dearth of wives was no difficulty, the evil customs of widowhood and sati were deep-rooted and common phenomena. Women were also dangerous things who must be veiled or kept carefully hidden within the four walls of the house. But if the condition of women was horrible, no better was the lot of the lower classes, who were denounced and detested as untouchables. Responsibility for this was that of the rigid and hereditary caste system which, besides giving rise to a false sense of social pride, bred exclusiveness in social relations, disintegrated the social structure and worst of all, condemned the greater part of the population to a life of perpetual subjection and servitude. If the lower classes were detested, the upper ones were detestable. They suffered from no social tyranny or handicaps, they had no superiors in the social hierarchy to pander to or to dance attendance or fawn upon, but

1. However, the practice of sati was abolished in the Panjab as soon as it passed under the British sway.

they were the slaves of their own evil habits. They had enormons wealth and lived luxuriously. Extensive use of liquor, plurality of wives, keeping of prostitutes and unclean domestic life were only some of the social evils by which they were afflicted.

Religious and social degradation affected the vitality and sound flow of political life. The chiefs, who constituted the governing class, lost all sense of history, of heritage and of mission. Blinded by self-interests, they were enmeshed in the tangled web of mutual rivalries and intrigues, from which there seemed no exit. The result was that the Sikh Court was riven by faction politics. So long as Ranjit Singh was alive, the factions were kept down. But after him the weakness of his successors facilitated their interplay and allowed them to work havoc with the state. The interests of the state and the community were subordinated to those of the respective faction groups.

But how do we account for all this going down the hill? This is a very intricate question to which no single factor will supply the answer. However, so far as the Sikhs are concerned, a good part of the explanation may be found to lie in the consequences flowing from their emergence as a political power during the second half of the 18th century. The attainment of political power, no doubt, gave them a sense of fulfilment and of achievement and generated the necessary climate for the building up of a powerful state later on under the able and inspired leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But at the same time it opened out to them large vistas of personal ambition. The process commenced under the Misaldars and gained in momentum with the expansion of the Khalsa dominions. The conferment of jagirs, privileges and high ranks upon them by Ranjit Singh blunted their sense of mission and created in their hearts inordinate love of wine, women and wealth. The author of *Namdhari*

Itihas, Nahar Singh, has summed up the situation beautifully[1]:

"Overnight the poor Sikh soldiers had turned into jagirdars. A few daring souls among them had become owners of several villages and had turned into sardars ; a few others had occupied taluqas and become rajas. The effect of this territorial aggrandisement was that the missionaries and high-priests of Sikhism of yore had abandoned their noble work and devoted themselves wholly to the management of their newly acquired possessions.

"With a view to making the most of the enjoyments available to them through the instrumentality of their extensive wealth, almost all the new jagirdars, sardars and rajas had taken to drinking, plurality of wives, patronage, in the manner of Muslim nawabs, of prostitutes, dancing girls, 'mirasis', 'dooms', 'dafals', 'bhands', and 'bharuas' (mimics, jesters, clowns and buffoons)."

The condition of the Sikh rank and file was much better. They still had the fire of the commonwealth ideal of Guru Gobind Singh burning in their hearts. A striking demonstration of the contrast in the outlook and behaviour of these two classes, the lords and the commons, was subsequently provided by the two Anglo-Sikh Wars, in which whereas the former intrigued and betrayed, the latter shed their life's precious blood in a bid to save the motherland. All contemporary observers, particularly connected with these wars, were deeply struck by their gallantry and sense of devotion to the cause of their independent rule. And yet these commons, too, (of course not all of them) had been or were being, enervated by the gradually declining element of the Gurus' teachings in their daily life. This explains their odd behaviour at times, which has been derisively termed by some people as 'burchha-gardi' (rowdiness).

1. **Part I, P. 93.**

Realizing the danger involved in this situation, some sensitive and detached minds felt concerned and efforts began to be made to correct the wrong trends. Some useful work in this connection was done by Baba Dayal, founder of the Nirankari Movement, Bhagat Jawahir Mal and Baba Balak Singh, the divine master of Baba Ram Singh. However, the total impact of all these endeavours on the society was not much and the rot continued as before; rather it gathered momentum in the days of anarchy after the demise of Ranjit Singh. The internal dissensions of the Khalsa State provided the troubled waters in which the British machinations could easily fish. The result was the annexation of the Panjab and the loss of freedom.

After the annexation the situation in some respects received a further set-back, while in some others it got a stimulus. The new rulers disbanded the Khalsa Army and replaced the Sikh soldiers by the Gurkha, Poorbiya and Muslim sepoys. The interior forts were demolished and the people were disarmed. A new assessment of land revenue was ordered and a programme of public works was initiated. Similarly, arrangements were made for the introduction of a new system of courts and schools.

Apparently, the country was settled, but the advent of the new political order brought to the forefront two mutually conflicting currents of thought in the Sikh community. On the one hand there were people who, with a selfish axe to grind, began to extol the British Government or who, overcome by a sense of frustration or helplessness, tended to develop an attitude of olympian indifference towards their conquerors. Many of these latter, perhaps, were only biding their time and would welcome an opportunity when they could reassert themselves. Then, there were also people who found it difficult to reconcile themselves to an unending life of subjection. Among them there were some ardent and irrepressible

spirits who consistently harboured ideas of rebellion against the British Government. They were the torch-bearers of freedom. Apart from the sense of loss of their independence in 1849, they were appalled by some of the activities of the new administration. For instance, the Christian missionaries had followed the British political power and overrun the whole of the Panjab. They were assiduously engaged on the work of converting the people to Christianity and in the efforts to achieve their end, were making frequent indiscreet attacks on the religion and culture of our people. Much more objectionable than this calculated conversion campaign was the removal of the long-standing ban on the slaughter of cows and the sale of beef. The establishment of butcheries for this purpose, particularly at sacred places like Amritsar, made their very flesh creep and they were impatient for retaliation. But their number was extremely limited and did not seem to make any material difference to the general picture of low morality, lethargy, indifference and awe of the British Government. This picture was rendered all the more sombre and dismal by the upper classes of the Sikh community assuming the role of sycophants and stooges of the new political masters. In the words of Gyan Singh, the author of *Twarih Guru Khalsa*[1], "they had travelled far away from the Sikh way of life, the way of truth, love and purity."

How did Baba Ram Singh react to this situation ? His firm view was that the real cause of the degradation of the society and of the loss of independence in the Panjab, as in other parts of India, was the fall of moral and spiritual values. British intrigues and the superiority of the enemy's resources were undoubtedly important factors, but even so they were no match for the internal decay as a factor in the fall of the independent Khalsa rule. When in service, he would often draw the attention

1. Quoted in Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, *'Jug Paltaoo Satguru,'* P. 23.

of others to this all-too-important fact. He was a relentless critic of the falling standards of behaviour among his countrymen and sincerely believed that so long as no adequate heed was paid to the improvement of these standards, there was no solid basis of hope for their rule to continue for long. When he found no response to his appeals, criticism and dark predictions, he felt so disgusted that he left the service unmindful of the consequences that his action would bring to the state which he otherwise cherished so dearly. The fall of moral and spiritual values was attributed by him to the accumulation of wealth and power into the hands of a few upper class people. This decay was not a phenomenon which suddenly made its appearance after the death of Ranjit Singh. As a matter of fact, it had been in progress ever since the popular leaders of the Misals had, in preference to continuing their old dedication to the cause of the Sikh commonwealth, chosen to give their first love to self-aggrandisement. The process had received a fresh accession of strength from Ranjit Singh's raising of a powerful and numerous class of jagirdars or landed aristocrats.

What was the remedy of this malady ? How could this downhill process be halted and turned into a life-giving, re-invigorating and inspiring social force ? For this Ram Singh could think of nothing better than the great path chalked out by the Gurus, particularly Guru Gobind Singh. For was it not due to this that the mighty edifice of the Mughal Empire was shaken by Banda Singh or that all the means employed by the Mughal Subedars of Lahore to crush the Sikhs as a community—the innumerable cruel executions, heartless persecutions, tempting prizes, barbarous outlawing measures alternating with allurements of nawabships and jagirs, and the blood-curdling *ghallugharas* (massacres)—not only failed to extinguish the flame of liberty in their hearts, but rather fortified them in their resolve to annihilate the power of the enemy and to substitute their own rule for

theirs ? Again, was it not due to this that the Afghans, victors of the Mughals and the Marathas, despite their overwhelming hordes and vast resources, found themselves outmanoeuvred by the Sikhs ? Baba Ram Singh firmly believed that if the Sikhs of the early 18th century were able to triumph over the heavy odds arrayed against them, it was largely owing to the fact that they fearlessly trod the path chalked out for them by their great master, Guru Gobind Singh. He, therefore, decided to make use of the same technique, the same methods and the same principles for meeting the challenge before him as Guru Gobind Singh about a century and a half earlier had prescribed. For this purpose a suitable organisation was most urgently called for, because without it he could not hope to achieve the object of his mission. His own ideas on this all-important subject had been gradually evolving. He was definitely a thinker and a leader. It was at a critical stage in the evolution of his ideas that he met a commanding personality in Baba Balak Singh at Hazru. The masterful influence of this noble man seems to have given a new edge, a new urgency to the mission that he wished to set out before himself.

CHAPTER III

LAUNCHING OF THE MOVEMENT : RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

THE long contemplated first step to which reference has been made at the close of the first chapter was taken in the year 1857 on the Baisakhi day. As seen before, the fame of Baba Ram Singh had already spread to the neighbouring villages and a sort of nucleus working centre had been in existence for quite some time now, the principal constituents of this centre being his erstwhile comrades of the Khalsa Army of Lahore. Therefore, there was no difficulty in getting together a reasonably large assembly on the appointed occasion at Bhaini. Here, before this assembly after a solemn religious ceremony, in which recitation of Gurbani (Gurus' hymns contained in the Holy Book), and Ardas (the Sikh prayer) were the prominent items, a flag was unfurled followed by administration of baptism to five Sikhs. The flag was triangular in shape and white in colour and was the symbol of the freedom struggle ahead, though it was not openly proclaimed. The baptism ceremony performed on the occasion was the same as that prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh and was christened '*Khande da Amrit*' (nectar of the sword). This step had the significance of indicating Baba Ram Singh's resolve to recreate Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa and to purge the Sikh society of the great evils that had entered it from the wilful disregard or a motive of selfish exploitation, of this practice by the self-styled Sodhi and Bedi Gurus. The names of the first to be baptised have been given as under :

1. Bhai Kanh Singh Nihang, Village Chak, Malerkotla State.
2. Bhai Labh Singh, Amritsar.
3. Bhai Naina Singh Wariyah, Amritsar District.
4. Bhai Atma Singh, Village Ala Muhar, District Sialkot.
5. Bhai Sudh Singh, Village Durgapur, District Jullundur.

Then followed a long stream of baptisms. All the initiates were later enjoined to observe strictly the code of conduct laid down by the great Guru Gobind Singh and based on a harmonious blending of a life of the spirit with that of moral fervour and physical courage. They were given the further injunction of following the discipline of the five 'Ks'—Kes (unshorn hair), Kanga (comb for the hair), Kachha (shorts), Kara (iron bangle), and Kirpan (sword). Since the Kirpan had been disallowed by the Government, a heavy lathi was ordered to be kept in its place. As special marks of distinction, each one of them was required to keep a woollen rosary, to put on white dress and to have a white turban tied in a straight manner. As a result of this, all the followers of the Kuka order acquired a uniform external look, which is so essential for the discipline and strength of an organisation.

In the words of the official correspondence printed in 1863, the brotherhood was distinguishable from the rest of the people "by the tie of their turban, sheeda pug, by a watchword, by a necklace of knots made in a white woollen cord to repeat beads and which are worn by all the community[1]." The watchword is said to be the uttering of 'Sat Sri Akal Purkh' in reply to 'Sat Sri Akal[2].' There was a special emphasis laid on the administration

1. Home Judicial Proceedings 273-284 of August 1872.

2. Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons: 111/112, Statement by Capt. Wall, District Superintendent, Gujranwala.

of *'Gurumantar'*, that is, the secret word *'Wahiguru'* whispered by the Guru into the ear of the new entrant. This was considered important in so far as it established a personal contact between the teacher and the disciple and possessed great potentialities for working a psychological change in the heart of the recipient of the *Gurumantar*.

The persons leavened by the purificatory and morale-boosting ceremony of the *'Amrit'*, and organized as stated above have been called by three different names, Sant Khalsa, Namdharis and Kukas. The first two names have a reference to the spiritual cast or image of the personality into which they were required to mould themselves, for Sant Khalsa means a Sikh saint or a body of such people and Namdhari signifies a follower or a body of followers, of the path of the Name (i.e. devotion to God). The third name, Kuka, which at the time acquired a certain precedence over the other two names, was the pet name given by the public on account of the members' ecstatic behaviour accompanied by shouts at their religious functions, as had been well brought out by Dr. Natha Singh in his *'History of the Grewals*[1].' Sant Nidhan Singh Alam has a different view that the word Kuka has a political origin emanating from the 'Kook' (cry) for freedom[2].

From the very start the movement of Baba Ram Singh, formally founded in 1857, had a comprehensive aim to achieve, having all aspects such as religious, social and political. The religious and social part of the work, because it was not objectionable in the eyes of the Government, was carried on in the open. This could not be so in the case of political work which, therefore, had to be conducted under the surface. But it would be sheer naivety to say, on the basis of the religious and social overtones that the movement acquired in the

1. Quoted in Ganda Singh, op. cit. P. 44.
2. Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, '*Jug Paltaoo Satguru*,' P. 32.

process, that it had no political character at all. For the convenience of proper study, the religious and social aspects will be taken up in this chapter and the political aspects in the next.

Baba Ram Singh's work in the religious and social fields was of a fundamental character. He wished to create a new individual having a strong character, deep and steady in faith, firm in convictions and fearless in action, a model human being, an embodiment of love, truth, valour and self-sacrifice, a person free from superstition, lethargy and cowardice. This was most necessary, because ultimately everything turns on the individual character of the people; all the more so, because the character of an average Sikh had reached the nadir unknown to their history, a fact which, in the opinion of Ram Singh, really explained the decline and fall of the Sikh power in the Panjab. Similarly, he wanted to create a new society in which evils like social tyranny, inequality and exploitation should be absent.

The focal point in the programme of all-round development for the individual was a regular and all-out campaign for '*Amrit*' or baptism in the manner of Guru Gobind Singh. The main centre fixed for this purpose was, of course, Bhaini, the native place of the leader, but the ceremony was not limited to any particular place and could be performed anywhere, provided the requisite minimum number of the duly qualified Sikhs was forthcoming. Incidentally, this broke the monopoly over it of a few families of the Sodhis, Bedis and Udasis living at the major centres of Sikh religion. For the vigorous implementation of the plan of '*Amrit Parchar*', an organisation was built up, which has been described later in this chapter. As in the administration of baptism, so also in the matter of the code of conduct, Baba Ram Singh took his brief from Guru Gobind Singh, of whom he often regarded himself as a reincarnation, pinning his faith on some of the prophecies of '*The Book*

of Hundred Stories' (Sau Sakhis). The letters in circulation (like the two reported by the spy Gainda Singh) and the predictions current among the Kukas also point to the existence of a belief that "the basis of Guru Ram Singh's entire power was the book[1]" referred to above. All the same, it was not this but the Holy Granth which was to serve as the guide of the neophytes. In the words of Mr. Kinchant[2]:

> "Gobind Singh's Granth is the only true one written by inspiration and is the only sacred writing. Gobind Singh is the real Guru. Any person irrespective of a caste or religion can be admitted a convert. Sodees, Bedees, Mahunts, Brahmins and such likes are impostors as none are Gurus except Gobind Singh." Kinchant further points out that among the Namdharies "the converts are allowed to read Gobind Singh's Granth[3] and no other book."

The worship of one and only one God was strictly enjoined upon the members of the Kuka brotherhood. In no case were they to worship or pay homage to any god or goddess or any idols thereof. Similarly, a total ban was placed on visits to such places of popular resort as marhis (cremation marks), khankas (Muslim monasteries), kabars (graves), mazars (Muslim tombs) and smadhs (Hindu tombs). As indicated earlier, these places were habitually visited by ignorant and superstitious people, who begged the granting of their wishes and often made offerings there as a mark of respect and gratitude. According to Kinchant[4], "Debidwaras, Shibdwaras and Mandirs" were to be regarded as a means of extortion, to be held in contempt and never to be visited, for "idols and idol worship are insulting to God and

1. Ganda Singh, op. cit. P. 71.
2. Home Judicial Proceedings, 273-284 of August 1872 ; Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112.
3. This refers to the Sikh scripture, the *Holy Granth*, which was given its final shape by Guru Gobind Singh.
4. Home Judicial Procedings 273-284 of August 1872.

will not be forgiven." Such was the impact of these teachings on the minds of the Kukas that they not only themselves refrained from these prohibited activities, but also strove hard to prevent others from them by launching an all-out campaign to obliterate the hated objects. Their mood at the time was reflected in the popular song current among them, which opened with the following verse[1] :

"Marhi masani dhaake kar deo maidana.
Pehlon maro Pir Behnoi phir maro Sultana."

(Destroy and raise to the ground all marks of cremation and burial. First destroy the worship of Pir Behnoi and then that of Sakhi Sarvar Sultan.)

However, this radical method of dealing with the problem was as quickly abandoned as it was adopted. The main reason for this was its strong disapprobation by Baba Ram Singh, as has been mentioned by Col. Mc Andrew[2].

Maximum emphasis was laid on a life of prayerfulness and meditation. Ram Singh was never tired of repeating and actually once wrote to his brother Budh Singh that "I maintain friendship only with those who devote themselves, whoever they may be, to worship and prayers[3]." Strict instructions were issued that everybody should meditate on God regularly, should participate without fail in the daily religious congregations and memorise the Gurbani of the '*Nitnem*' (daily discipline), such as Japji, Jap Sahib, Rahiras and Kirtan Sohila. The *Rahatnama* prepared and enforced by Baba Ram Singh had the unequivocal stipulation on the subject : "At all times be engaged in the worship of God[4]."

But a life of prayerfulness and meditation is meaningless, if it is not reflected in actions. Hence, every

1. Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112, P. 3.
2. Foreign Political (A), February 1868, Cons : 202-203, P. 7.
3. Home Judicial Proceedings, 257-259 of August 1879.
4. *Rahatnama*—see Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit. P. 71.

possible effort was made to inculcate in the minds of the devotees the love of a pure and simple life. They must believe in and practice truth and love. They must abstain from the evils of drinking, stealing, adultery, falsehood, slandering, back-biting and cheating etc. The defaulters were to be penalised with social boycott. An injunction to this effect was put in the *circular letter* of Ram Singh, intercepted by the Government in 1863, which says[1] : "If anyone is found guilty of stealing, adultery and other evils like them, do not let him sit in your meetings. If he does so forcibly, then pray to God to disable him to do so." There is also evidence in the same document to show that lists of the defaulters were often prepared and circulated for wide publicity and general social boycott. Major Perkins, in one of his reports on the Kukas, refers to the provision of a Panchayat (a people's court) where the offenders could be punished or brought back to the path of religious purity[2]. Self-sacrifice was the first lesson given to a new disciple. This is evident from the initiation verse, which in the report of Kinchant reads as follows[3]:

> "First consent to death; give up the desire to live; become the dust of the earth; and then come to me."
>
> The original verse in Punjabi, taken from Guru Arjun's hymns[4], is as follows:
>
> "Pehlon maran kabul kar, jiwan ki chhad aas.
>
> Ho sabhna ki renka, taan aao hamare pass."

The act of initiation over, the disciple was exhorted to abjure all vices which degrade the character. The Kuka code of conduct laid special stress on abstinence from smoking and meat-eating and the use of all intoxi-

1. Home Judicial Progs. 273—284 of August 1872 ; Foreign Political (A) March 1867 Cons : 111/112, p. 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. *Adi Granth*, Salok Maru, 5.

cants like liquors, hemp and opium etc. The very sight of a smoking pipe (hooka) worked up their blood and the more excitable among them could not prevent themselves from attacking and destroying the object of their hatred. Cow-protection was also made a cardinal principle of their social ethics. Beggary was to be shunned at all costs. Charity was recommended, but professionalism associated with it was denounced. The best form of charity was the help rendered to the poor, the destitute, the sick and the disabled. This fact is repeatedly brought out in the letters of Baba Ram Singh addressed to his brother Budh Singh. Hard work and honesty in the means of earning livelihood was made an essential ingredient of a Kuka's mode of living. No parasitism was contemplated or tolerated. Ram Singh himself set a noble example by refusing to appropriate for his own needs any part of the devotees' offerings and continuing to draw his sustenance from the sale proceeds of his shop, which was in existence even as late as 1872, the year of his arrest and exile. Nahar Singh writes[1]: "His teaching was that everyone must live by the sweat of his labour, none must be idle, neither the richman, nor the one devoted to religious life."

Another cardinal principle of his teaching was that none should encroach upon another's rights. Guru Nanak's verse "Haq praya Nanaka us suar us gae" (the other man's right (encroachment on) should be tantamount to eating a pig's flesh for a Muslim and a cow's flesh for a Hindu) was held out as a motto for one's guidance[2]. Baba Ram Singh, like his master Guru Gobind Singh, did not contemplate merely the creation of an order of saints or godly people. He definitely wanted his followers to be heroes, as eminent in valour as in the life of the spirit. For this purpose two things were stressed, building up of physical strength and development of martial qualities.

1. Nahar Singh, op. cit. p. 135.
2. Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit. p. 71—*Rahatnama*.

With a view to achieving the former, the Kukas were urged upon to rear cows and buffaloes, to use a lot of milk, butter and ghee and to toughen themselves by habits of industry and endurance. The latter object was to be attained by insistence on the necessity of breeding horses, learning horsemanship, carrying heavy lathis (staffs) at all times, indulging in gatka-play (an Indian exercise useful in learning swordsmanship) and above all, doing '*Chandi da path.*' Chandi here refers to an epic composition of Guru Gobind Singh, entitled '*Chandi di Var* 'or' *Var Sri Bhagauti ji ki* ; it has the theme of a war between the goddess Chandi and demons. A special method of its recitation was laid down in the *Rahatnama*, the Kuka code of conduct. The official account of the ceremony is reproduced below[2]:

> "First two or three maunds of wood are collected and set fire to. Then ghee, halwa, fruits etc. are thrown into it, to make the wood burn more slowly; the assembled Kukas stand around, whilst one reads the Granth and others repeat Ashlokas. After this has been going on for a time, some of them became so excited that they endeavoured to throw themselves into the fire. However, certain men are invariably told off beforehand to prevent the more excitable brethren doing any harm to themselves."

This account, though lacking in many of the details mentioned in the *Rahatnama*, gives the gist of the whole affair.

A dirty body is good neither for physical or mental health nor for spiritual progress. This important fact was constantly impressed upon all Kukas. There was a strictest injunction in the *Rahatnama* that every member of the fraternity "must take bath before taking meals." Writes Major Perkins :[2] "The converts were

1. Home-Judicial Proceedings, 273-284 of August 1872 ; Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112, p. 3.

2. Home-Judicial Proceedings, 273—284 of August 1872 ; Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112, p. 2.

ordered to bathe the entire body and wash the hair of their heads every morning at 3 o'clock." According to Fazal Hussain[1], who had a personal interview with Baba Ram Singh, the Baba was up every morning at 2 o'clock and had three baths a day. The high regard for personal hygiene was extended beyond regular daily baths to clothes, eatables, cook-houses and even community kitchens.

The society is composed of individuals. If the individuals are improved, the society is automatically improved. Even so, there are certain social ills that need to be attacked and uprooted, if social life is to be healthy and wholesome. There were many problems then relating to the marriage system, the status of women and the caste system, which were dehumanising and devitalising the society and cried for an urgent solution. Baba Ram Singh made frontal assaults on them, so that the stream of social life might flow clear and resplendent.

To do away with the grievous disabilities from which the female society suffered, Ram Singh offered the women, who cared to enter the fold of his organisation, equal rights with the men. They were baptised in the same way in which the men were and were supposed to participate in all the functions of the community on a footing of equality. They were no longer required to keep themselves secluded within the four walls of their households or to move about with veiled faces. Likewise, enforced widowhood was declared a thing of the past. The official account published in 1863 describing the leading features of Baba Ram Singh's doctrines writes distinctly[2]: "He enjoins the marriage of widows....advocates much too free intercourse between the sexes; men and women rave together at his meetings; and thousands of women and young girls have joined the sect; he exhorts his disciples to be cleanly and truth-telling." Some of these ladies like

1. Foreign Political (A) February 1868, Cons. 202-203.

2. Home Judicial Proceedings, 273-284 of August 1872; For : Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112.

Mai Hukmi were assigned positions of high trust and responsibility. Kapur Singh in his book '*Sapt Sring*' has explained the importance of Ram Singh's work in this respect[1] : "After the Sikh Gurus, Nanak and Gobind Singh," he says, "there was a very great reformer and leader of thought, who worked for a complete equality of the sexes in the society and achieved notable success in his efforts. Even if his other great achievements are left out of consideration, this alone—the preaching that men and women are entitled to equal rights in the society—will rank him with the leading-most reformers of the world."

The Kuka *Rahatnama* laid down the strictest injunctions regarding the evil customs of female infanticide, early marriage and sale and barter of daughters in marriage:

> "Nobody is allowed to charge a price for the marriage of his daughter or sister. Barter marriage is also prohibited. Remember the Guru always. Let everyone know that marriage of girls under fifteen or sixteen is forbidden[2]."

The same injunction is found in much more emphatic language in the *circular letter* of Ram Singh intercepted by the Government in 1863 :

> "Whoever makes money by the marriage of his daughter is a rascal. Whoever commits infanticide or gives away his daughter in barter marriage is an evil-doer[3]."

A simple and inexpensive form of marriage was substituted for the old one which was so notorious for complexity and extravagance. The new system, called the Anand Marriage for its performance in the presence of the Holy Granth amidst recitations from it, forbade any expenditure on such cumbersome and superfluous items as dowry, ornaments, costly robes, display of fireworks,

1. *Sapt Sring*, p. 11.
2. *Rahatnama*—Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit. p. 72.
3. Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit. p. 70; Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112.

showers of copper and silver (sote), sumptuous feasts and other entertainment programmes etc. This reform was not merely a social necessity to save the girl's parents from a tantalizing life-long mental agony and to stamp out the root cause of all female degradation, but also an economic urgency to prevent the unfortunate among the people from falling precipitately into the iron clutches of the money-lenders. It may be worthwhile here to remember that the evil of rural indebtedness was dangerously growing during this period. The revenue policy of the Government, the new principles of justice followed by the courts, the unrestricted freedom of operation enjoyed by the money-lending class and many other things had a lot to do with the rise of this phenomenon. All the same, the costly and extravagant marriage system, combined with many other expensive domestic practices, was no meagre factor contributing to the impoverishment of the people and their consequent dependence upon the usurious classes. An Anand marriage was performed at the nominal cost of a few rupees. It was readily acceptable to the poor villagers who constituted the bulk of his followers. This new practice was first introduced at the village Khote in the first week of June, 1863. Once initiated, it became so popular that later on in 1909 it was given a statutory recognition by the passage of the Anand Marriage Act. One important but incidental result of the change effected was the breakdown of the professional Brahmin marriage-maker's monopoly in so-for-as the reformed Kuka fraternity was concerned.

Rigours of the caste system were an anathema to Baba Ram Singh. He refused to have any regard for the artificial caste barriers. His mission was for all castes and all religions. In the correspondence printed in 1863, there is a report saying[1] : "He abolished all distinctions of caste among Sikhs; advocates indiscrimate marriages

1. Home Judicial Proceedings, 273-284 of August 1872; Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112.

of all classes." A report from Major Perkins, Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, further mentions[1]: "All castes of Hindus and even Muslims may become Kukas, but the converts were chiefly made from Jats, Tarkhans, Chamars and Mazhibis...." Mr. Kinchant in 1863 and Captain Menzies in 1866 corroborated the above facts by saying that the Kuka converts were generally drawn from the lower classes of the Hindus, though it was also possible for the Muslims to become Kukas. Mian Fazal Hussain in his report (1867) testifies to some Musalmans of lower classes actually having become Kukas[2]. Inter-caste marriage was considered an essential factor in the emotional integration of the society. A beginning in this direction was made at Khote in 1863, when a few such matrimonial alliances were effected. In one case the daughter of a carpenter was married into the family of an Arora.

However, whatever the merit of the social and religious ideas involved in this movement, it must, like all other movements, be backed by a suitable and effective organisation, if it was to make its mark deep and wide. Baba Ram Singh, who had a natural flair for a work of this type, recognised the importance of evolving an organisation from the very inception of the movement in 1857. Bhaini, now called Bhaini Sahib, was built up as the metropolitan centre of the Kukas and their work. The personal presence of the Baba, continuous and simultaneous reading of scriptures, several in number, regular morning and evening services and congregations and an all-time community kitchen at this place attracted people from far and near in large and ever-growing numbers. For the visitors it soon became a seat of pilgrimage and a source of inspiration. They had the much-coveted sight of the Guru, listened to his message, received the '*Gurmantar*' from his own blessed lips and returned to their respective places much stronger in

1. Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112.
2. Foreign Political (A) Feb., 1868, Cons : 202-203.

spirit than they had come. As the work grew up, a special committee was set up to look after the affairs of the centre. Some years later some important fairs like the Holi and Dussehra were held here, which further raised the importance of Bhaini Sahib.

For the purpose of religious propagation and social uplift, bands of musicians (ragi jathas) were fitted out at Bhaini Sahib and sent in different directions. They had the specific instruction to sing nothing but the hymns of the Holy Granth. The following are some of these bands along with their respective areas of operation[1]:

1. Ragi Jatha Bhai Ditoo and Bhai Fakirya—District Sialkot.
2. Ragi Jatha Bhai Prem Singh and Bhai Kirpal Singh Bhadaur—Malwa.
3. Ragi Jatha Bhai Tara and Bhai Pali of Atari—Majha Region.
4. Ragi Jatha Bhai Suba Singh—Doaba.
5. Dhadi Jatha (singers of epics) Bhai Peshaura Singh and Bhai Sant Singh of Talwandi Malya—entire Panjab.

Bhai Khazan Singh, Ratan Singh, Harnam Singh, Sujan Singh and Avtar Singh were the musicians operating at Bhaini Sahib proper and in the immediate neighbourhood.

Besides the musicians, a number of missionaries were appointed, whose number was raised to twenty-two after Baba Ram Singh was placed under internment in 1863. They were called Subas. With the exception of a few, who were assigned management of the Bhaini Darbar and coordination of the work elsewhere, all these people were allotted separate theatres of operation. The following list is given in the Government Records[2] :

1. Jaswant Singh Jas, *Baba Ram Singh*, P. 17.
2. Home Judicial—August 1872, Cons : 273-284.



SUBA LAKHA SINGH

Name	age
1. Labh Singh	40 years—Jullundur and Ambala Districts.
2. Lakha Singh	28 years—Hoshiarpur and Jullundur.
3. Sahib Singh	34 years—An important Suba who always remained with Baba Ram Singh.
4. Kahn Singh	60 years—Hoshiarpur, Malwa, Ambala and Kohistan.
5. Narain Singh	32 years—Mukatsar and Ferozepur.
6. Soodh Singh	42 years—Ambala, Malwa and Majha.
7. Hookma Singh	25 years—Ludhiana and Majha.
8. Pahara Singh	37 years—Ludhiana and Gujranwala.
9. Jawahar Singh	46 years—Ferozepur and adjoining places.
10. Samund Singh	40 years—Ferozepur.
11. Aroor Singh	40 years—Amritsar.
12. Wassawa Singh	50 years—Karnal and Ambala.
13. Bibi Hookmi d/o Rattan Singh	20 years—Amritsar and Hoshiarpur.
14. Jetha Singh	35 years—Sialkot and Lahore.
15. Gopal Singh	35 years—Bhaini proper.
16. Brahma Singh	45 years—Jullundur, Gujranwala, Lahore and Sialkot.
17. Khazan Singh	35 years—Lahore and Amritsar.
18. Sarmukh Singh	30 years—Patiala.
19. Harnam Singh	28 years—Jind and Patiala.
20. Jumit Singh	50 years—Sialkot and around.
21. Malook Singh	35 years—Ferozepur.
22. Sadhu Singh	32 years—Ludhiana.

This list, however, does not wholly tally with the lists given in the works of Sanṭ Nidhan Singh Alam and

Nahar Singh[1]. For instance, the names of Rattan Singh, Khushal Singh, Man Singh, Bhagwan Singh, Raja Singh and Jota Singh mentioned by these writers are not found in the list given above. Perhaps, part of the difficulty may be solved by saying that the reports of the Government spies were not always thoroughly reliable and further, that there must have been some changes made from time to time in view of the fresh experience gained. Some of the above-mentioned Subas commanded powerful personalities and were eminently successful. They were Jawahar Singh, Sahib Singh, Brahma Singh, Bibi Hookmi, Sudh Singh and Kahn Singh. A few Subas were appointed for working outside the Panjab, as for example[2] :

1.	Suba Bishen Singh	—Kabul
2.	,, Narain Singh	—Gwalior and C.P.
3.	,, Kahn Singh	—Banaras
4.	,, Nihang Singh	—Nepal
5.	,, Hema Singh	—Kashmir

Under the Subas there were Naib Subas, Jathedars and local Sangats. Naib Subas and Jathedars were given smaller areas to operate in and were required to organise and supervise the missionary work of their respective places. The local Sangats constituted the base of the Kuka organisation. A Sangat was a society composed of the Kukas living in a particular village, which had a dharamsala (temple) of its own and a Granthi (scripture-reciter) to look after it and to teach Gurmukhi letters and Gurbani (Sikh scripture) to the members of the Sangat and their children, organised regular congregations and ran a free kitchen to feed the visitors from outside.

Baba Ram Singh himself showed the keenest interest in reaching out to the people to deliver his message personally to them. This, he thought, would impart a great momentum to the missionary activities of his Subas

1. Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit., p. 79.
2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs : 273-284—Appendix G, p. 2541.

and other functionaries. He, therefore, chalked out a programme of extensive tours through the length and breadth of the country. In this programme visits to important holy shrines like Amritsar, Anandpur and Mukatsar on the great occasions of Baisakhi, Dewali, Maghi and Holi were given the topmost priority, as it was believed that the huge assemblies of people usually found at these places on such occasions would provide him with the much-desired opportunities of direct contact and communication with the masses. He started with a visit to Hardwar in 1861 at the time of the Ardh-Kumbhi festival. After that he toured parts of the districts of Ludhiana and Jullundur. From there he proceeded towards Mukatsar to be present there on the occasion of the Maghi festival. From Mukatsar he returned to Bhaini. After a short time he set out on his third extensive tour in 1862 and reached as far as Wazirabad. In the course of this tour he visited numerous places in the districts of Sialkot, Gujranwala and Sheikhupur. After these long travels he came to Amritsar to attend the Baisakhi of 1863. The festival over, he proceeded to the district of Ferozepur via Kapurthala and Jullundur. In the first week of June 1863 he was at the village Khote initiating among his followers the Anand form of marriage, which has been referred to earlier in this chapter. This was the end of the first round of his tours, because it was here that the Government, alarmed by certain reports regarding his aims and activities, took him in custody preparatory to his internment later at Bhaini Sahib.

The second round of his tours commenced with a visit to Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of the Hola festival in March 1867. Later in the month of October he visited Amritsar on the Dewali Day. Next year again on the same occasion he was at Amritsar. During this period he was under official surveillance and only had the permission to make occasional visits to the important centres of Sikh religion. All the same, now. as before his detention in 1863, he brought into the ranks of the

Kukas thousands upon thousands of people through the instrumentality of his personal contact programme. The total number of the Kukas was estimated in 1863 at somewhere between 40,000 and 60,000. It rose tremendously after that and reached the figure of three or four lacs about the close of the sixties. Including the sehjdharis (slow-adopters) the number may be very much higher, but certainly not ten lacs, the figure given by Giani Rattan Singh in the court of Mr. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana.

It was natural that the rapid advancement of the Kuka Movement should cause consternation to those whose interest lay in keeping the people benighted and stuck up in the web of complicated rites, ceremonies, customs and practices. Prominent among these people were the Sodhis, Bedis and the priestly classes, Brahmins and Mahants. They were the reputed leaders of the society. Their leadership was now put in jeopardy by the very deep impact made by the movement of Ram Singh on the minds of the people. In the words of Ganda Singh[1], "On account of the missionary work of Bhai Ram Singh, the carpet of the gurudoms of the Sodhis, Bedis and so-called saints began to be rolled up..." This was bad enough, but worse still was the blow dealt out to their sources of income and means of exploitation[2]. That was the reason why Baba Ram Singh, wherever he went, experienced stiff resistance from the members of all these classes.

In 1861, when Ram Singh was at the village Muthada, the Brahmins of the locality picked up a quarrel with his followers by throwing smelly hooka-water on some of them. Later in 1863 during his stay at Khote, the local Brahmins threatened self-immolation as a protest against his innovation of Anand marriage. When this proved of no avail, they coaxed the local chowkidar to make a report at the police station of Bagha Purana that

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, op. cit., p. 41.
2. Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Cons : 111/112, p. 8.

the Kukas were indulging in seditious talk. This report was the immediate cause of the arrest of Baba Ram Singh. As regards the Pujaris or Mahants, they very often subjected the Kuka leader as well as his followers to humiliating treatment. In 1861 on the occasion of the Maghi festival, the priests of the Mukatsar gurdwara refused to pray for Ram Singh, unless he agreed, by way of penalty for his 'un-Sikh' ways, to pay the entire cost of masonry for the local tank. In 1863 and 1867 while visiting Amritsar, he received a similar degrading treatment from the Pujaris of some important shrines like the Akal Bunga.

However, the worst was reserved for his visit to Anandpur on the occasion of Hola in March 1867. In the beginning Mahant Hari Singh of the Kesgarh gurdwara was adamant that the Kukas must not be admitted into the holy precincts of Anandpur. Later on, even when he gave up this obduracy under official pressure, he insisted that he would only allow them to enter the gurdwara proper on certain conditions. Even when ultimately a settlement was arrived at and a party of Kukas headed by Ram Singh was granted admission, he accepted the proffered money from the Kuka Guru, but refused to pray for him. At the same time, an attack was attempted upon the visiting Kukas, at the instigation of the Mahant, by a party of armed Nihangs, which, but for the timely intervention of the police on the spot, would have certainly caused a great deal of bloodshed. Against this wholly nasty business the very soul of Baba Ram Singh revolted and he, immediately after the visit, wrote a letter of protest to the Pujari asking him: "What do you mean by refusing to pray for me? Do you not regard me as a Sikh of the Guru?" The Pujari gave no written reply to it, but made the following points[1]:

1. Home Judicial Progs., 273-284 of August 1872, p. 2461; Foreign Political (A) Feb., 1868, Cons: 202-203.

(i) That he sets himself a God.

(ii) That when making a convert, he does not give him *Amrit* to drink, as is the custom, but he whispers a mantra in his ear.

(iii) That when he makes a convert, he says to him: "Janam Guru Hazru, Urbashee Guru Bhainee," whereas the Sikhs say: "Janam Guru Patna, Urbashee Guru Anandpur".

(iv) That whereas the Sikhs entering a place of worship do not untie their hair or remove their turbans: Kukas do.

(v) That Kukas in exciting themselves to such a degree as to be at times insensible act like Mohammadan Faqirs and cannot be Guru Sikhs.

To all these above charges Ram Singh sent the following reply, as reported by Mian Fazl Hussain[1]: "...that if they really acted up to the Sikh religion, they would appreciate his doctrine; that they act contrary to the 'Granth' by eating meat, drinking, lying, licentiousness, female infanticide etc. and that therefore Kukas do not consider them Sikhs."

Returning to Bhaini Sahib he sent another remonstration to the Pujaris of Anandpur, in which he said: "You prevent us from entering the gurdwaras. Why don't you do so in the case of meat-eaters and wine-drinkers? The punishment for this thing will be that your names will be placed on the black list under preparation." But according to the Report of the I. G., Police for 1867, this letter was intercepted by the Government[2].

From the above controversy it is not difficult to see the difference in the outlook of the two parties. Baba Ram Singh attaches more importance to the substance of religion and does not care much for the form, provided the substance guides the human conduct, whereas the Pujaris give all the importance to the form and are not bothered much if the substance is sacrificed for it.

1. Home Judicial Proceedings, 273-284 of August 1872, p. 2461.
2. Foreign Political (A) Feb., 1868, Cons: 202-203.

CHAPTER IV

LAUNCHING OF THE MOVEMENT : POLITICAL ASPECTS

Reference has been made in the preceding chapters to the political aspirations of the Kukas. They eagerly wanted to win back the freedom that had been lost by the Panjab passing into the hands of the British. And they could not be reconciled to the new political order; rather, their hostility to it was intensified by the zeal of the Christian missionaries in converting the people to their religion and removal of the ban on cow-slaughter.

The unfurling of a flag and the establishment of a society called 'Sant Khalsa' in 1857 were not merely steps to tone up social and religious life, but also the inauguration of a political movement. For it is clear from the very beginning that the movement was to be run on the lines of Guru Gobind Singh, who had first created and militarised the Khalsa, and then employed it in his prolonged struggle against the Mughal imperialism of Aurangzeb. The greatest stress was placed upon '*Khande da Amrit*' introduced by Gobind Singh and observance of the associated strict discipline substituting heavy 'lathis' (sticks) for the disallowed 'kirpans'. Obviously, the flag and the lathi cannot be the insignia of a peaceful movement concentrating merely on religious and social problems. Nor could '*Chandi-Path*', explained in the earlier chapter, be intended merely for a religious aim, because the epic poem as well as the manner and fiery context of its recitation are predominantly suggestive of an attempt to create heroic and martial spirit. Fixation of a common secret watch-

word and uniform dress for all, which made the Sant Khalsa a closely-knit and compact organisation, is another pointer to a similar conclusion. The presence of an independent and secret dak system from the very inception of the movement, too, lifts it above the ordinary religious and social plane and alludes to its secret political purpose.

But perhaps more important than all these was the ideology of Guru Gobind Singh, to which were yoked the chariot wheels of the Kuka Movement. This ideology visualised, as is well-known, a nation of heroes, who would give no quarter to tyranny in any form. Freedom from political tyranny was not excluded from this ; but rather was very much part of the goal to be attained. The instructions as well as the personal example of Guru Gobind Singh left no doubt about it. Besides, his long struggle against the Mughals created a tradition of heroism, which is an all-time source of inspiration. This inspired and led the Sikhs in the 18th century through a titanic struggle against heavy odds to victory and sovereignty. The same could be depended upon to inspire and sustain the Kukas in their fight for freedom from the British domination.

Seen in this context, the proclaimed identification of the Kuka leader with Guru Gobind Singh is of momentous importance. "His (Ram Singh's) disciples actually believed him to be Gooroo Gobind Singh, risen from the dead again[1]." There were letters in circulation, based on the '*Sau Sakhis*[2]', which referred to a prophecy, presumably of Gobind Singh, saying that he would be reborn as Ram Singh. The opening lines of one intercepted by the British in 1863 read as follows[3] :

> "Guru Gobind Singh Sahai. I, Guru Gobind Singh, will be born in a carpenter's shop and may be called Ram Singh. My house will be between the Jumna and Sutlej Rivers."

1. Foreign Political (A) March 1867, Consultation, 111/112, P.6.
2. See Attar Singh, *Sakhee Book*, Benares, 1873—Sakhees 15 and 51.
3. Ibid, P. 5. For details see page 44.

It will be seen, then, that the Kuka Movement started with a political aim. To say that it intended to achieve merely social and religious amelioration would be to do injustice to the memories of those who led it or who laid down their precious lives in the service of the country. Another view held by some people that it was a reform movement driven to politics by the imperial policy of distrust and harassment does only half justice to it, because it mentions merely the negative aspect. The policy of persecution adopted by the Government was the result and not the cause so much of the Kuka political designs. After the bitterest lesson of the Revolt of 1857, the Government was extremely shy of interfering with religious and social activities of the Indians. If this policy was departed from in the case of the Kukas, it must be because the British apprehended a serious danger from them to their rule. The Kuka Movement is perhaps best understood in the background of the powerful Khalsa bid to save their independence prior to 1849. The bid had, no doubt, failed, but the strong urge behind it lived on and after a few years found expression in the rising of the Kukas.

Here one question naturally arises. If the Kuka Movement had a political purpose from the beginning, then how is it that its founder Baba Ram Singh did not join the Revolt of 1857 ? It is a very pertinent question, but the answer to it is not difficult to find. Although his movement was started one month before the Great Revolt broke out, he had hardly any backing at the time. Of course, it was open to him to take a personal plunge into the rebellion, but that by itself would have scarcely achieved anything. And then, there was his passionate belief that it was no use to win freedom, if it could not be retained. He had repeatedly pronounced this truth to his colleagues on the eve of the First Anglo-Sikh War. He could not see how the people, who had lost the freedom earlier through their weakness of character, could fare better, unless they had been properly mended. His

thinking was that the struggle for freedom must be founded upon the integrity of the people's character. As this prerequisite of success required time to be realized, no precipitate action, he believed, would be either wise or successful.

For a few years after its foundation the movement of Baba Ram Singh carried on its work quietly. It was not till 1863 that the Government first became alive to its political implications. Mr. Macnabb, the Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot, was the first official to draw the attention of the Punjab Government to the matter. He reported on 5th April 1863 that "an elderly Sikh of Ludhiana was going about the country with 200 men, whom he drilled at night with sticks instead of muskets; that he boasted of 5000 followers[1] and obeyed no Hakim. They proposed going with a lot of women, who were also of their party, to the Baisakhi fair at Amritsar[2]."

Upon the receipt of the above report, the Government of the Punjab issued instructions to the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police of all districts to keep a vigilant eye on Ram Singh and his followers and to send confidential reports. Further, Major McAndrew, Deputy Inspector General, Police, Lahore Circle, was directed to proceed to Amritsar on the occasion of the Baisakhi fair and, together with Mr. Mercer, the Deputy Commissioner of the place, to "institute a strict enquiry regarding Ram Singh and his real intentions[3]." Baba Ram Singh with his party reached Amritsar on 11th April 1863. Soon after, Major McAndrew and Mr. Mercer had a talk with him, in which many searching questions were asked. After the talk a report was made to the Punjab Government by Mercer, which *inter alia* contained the following information[4]: "All his followers were sturdy

1. This seems to be the figure for Sialkot District only, because according to other estimates the strength of the Kukas ranged between 40,000 and 60,000.

2. Nahar Singh, *Gooroo Ram Singh and the Kuka Sikhs—Documents*, 1863—1871, p. 1. (Henceforth to be called Kuka Documents.)

3. Ibid, p. 2.

4. Ibid, p. 2.

young men, each with a stout stick. He expressed his intention of going to his home on the breaking up of the fair and as no seditious language had been used, and he seemed peaceably disposed, it was considered unadvisable to interfere with him at the height of the fair. The Deputy Inspector General of Police and the Deputy Commissioner, with the Superintendent of Police, visited him and as he seemed quite agreeable to their suggestion of dismissing the greater portion of his followers, he was allowed to go his way."

The satisfaction of the Punjab Government derived from the above report was soon rudely shaken by the affair of the village Khote. When Baba Ram Singh was holding a dewan (congregation) there and introducing his marriage reforms, the local Chowkidar lodged a report at the police station of Bagha Purana to the effect[1] : "For two or three days Ram Singh with 4 or 500 followers had assembled at his village and was behaving in a very extraordinary manner. They talked sedition; said the country would soon be theirs and they would speedily have 1,25,000 armed men to back them; that they would only take a fifth of the land's produce from the cultivators." This report was verified and confirmed independently by a police Sergeant of Bagha Purana and an Assistant Superintendent, Police, of Ferozepur. Both of them visited Khote and the neighbouring villages and recorded statements of the prominent people there. A report was then prepared by Lieut. Hamilton, Superintendent of Police, Ferozepur and sent to the Punjab Goverment. Without any loss of time, orders were issued to Mr. Thomas, the Deputy Commissioner of the district, personally to go to Khote, convince himself of the case and take Ram Singh in custody forthwith, if necessary. After carefully scrutinising the whole matter, the Deputy Commissioner banned all meetings of the Kukas in the district of Ferozepur and ordered that "Ram Singh himself and his Chelas (disciples)

1. Ibid, p. 3.

were to be sent, station by station, to his home at Bhaini, in Ludhiana[1]."

The Khote affair created a great stir in the official circles. A clear indication of it may be found in Major McAndrew's report of the 7th June 1863. Already, the policy of strict vigilance had been introduced. All Kuka parties and meetings were now carefully shadowed by the police and their secret agents. Urgent confidential instructions from the Punjab Government went forth to all district headquarters to probe deeper the character of the Kuka Movement. Some of the reports received in this connection are very significant.

Capt. Miller, Cantonment Magistrate, Jullundur's report was of a sensational character and may be mentioned first. It was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police, Jullundur, on 11th June 1863 and reads as follows[2] : "Gaindah Singh, a Sikh informer, was sent to Ram Singh's village. The Gooroo himself was absent, but Sahib Singh, his lieutenant, was there. He expressed a desire to become a convert and joined their party, which at night amounted to about 50 men. The "dhole" was sounded, and every one got a stick from Sahib Singh, who then proceeded to drill the party for about two hours, and all shouted "Akal, Akal." Gaindah Singh then expressing a desire to see the Gooroo himself, his disciple told him where to find him and gave him two papers for Ram Singh. These he never delivered, pretended to have lost them and on return to Jullundur made them over to the Cantonment Magistrate. The following are rough translations of the documents :

No. 1.—"Salutation. The Sahi of Gooroo Govind Singh. I, Gooroo Govind Singh, will be born in a carpenter's shop, and will be called Ram Singh. My house will be between the Jumna and Sutlej Rivers. I will

1. Ibid, p. 3.
2. Foreign Political (A) Cons., March 1867, Nos. 111/112.

declare my religion. I will defeat the Feringhee and put the crown on my own head, and blow the sunkh. The musicians shall praise me in 1921 (1864). I, the carpenter, will sit on the throne. When I have got one lakh and twenty five thousand Sikhs with me, I will cut off the heads of the Feringhees. I will never be conquered in battle and will shout "Akal, Akal." The Christians will desert their wives and fly from the country when they hear the shout of 1¼ lakhs of Khalsas. A great battle will take place on the banks of the Jumna and blood will flow like the waters of the Ravee and no Feringhee wiil be left alive. Insurrections will take place in the country in 1922 (1865). The Khalsa will reign and the rajah and ryot will live in peace and comfort and no one shall molest another. Day by day Ram Singh's rule will be enlarged. God has written this. It is no lie, my brethren. In 1865 the whole country will be ruled by Ram Singh. My followers will worship Bhagras. God says this will happen."

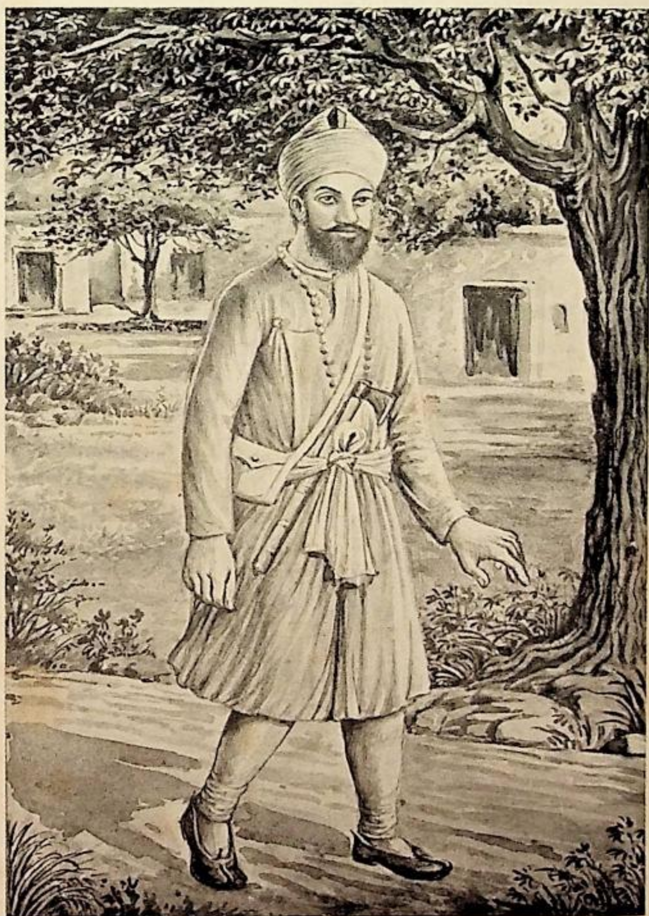
No. II.—Salutation. Read the enclosed (i.e. the above) to all Sikhs. It is the request of the Sikhs here. Send news of your whereabouts. We wish to see you here. You have been absent a long time; come in this direction quickly. We cannot remain apart from you so long.

The veracity of Gainda Singh's statement, as also the genuineness of the two letters brought by him, has been questioned by some writers as being the figment of the spy's own imagination. But this is an extreme view not borne out by facts. Soon after, the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur despatched a party of his own consisting of four people to Bhaini to verify the report of Captain Miller. One of them was Gainda Singh, the previous informer. The other three (their names are not given in the official records) were "men of good position and high respectability[1]." "On[2] reaching

1. For. Pol. (A) Cons., March 1867, Nos. 111/112.
2. Ibid.

Loodiana it was found that the only men who could assume like a practicable disguise were Gainda Singh and one more member of the party. These two accordingly visited Ram Singh, and though he was very suspicious, being now under strict police surveillance, yet he did not distrust them, as he had seen the informer, and No. 1 was now introduced as his brother. They remained two days with him, and he treated them very kindly. On the first night he initiated them, and gave them a rosary, or necklace made of wool. He had only one by him, but said a large supply was coming. The Goormunter or mystic word he taught them was simply "*Wah Gooroo*," which they were to repeat constantly with their lips, but teeth closed. He gave them some exceptionable advice as to their mode of life. They were perfectly orderly and quiet. One night, however, he said that his disciples had been molested in Amritsar, Ferozepore and other places, but that one of his followers (being under divine protection) was equal to 100 other men, European soldiers included; that on one occasion three Europeans actually came to his house or tent at Amritsar, and that if they had arrested him, his followers would have forthwith killed them. He had plenty of disciples in the Amritsar police, who, had he chosen, would in half an hour have rid the place of every European in it,—but the time had not yet come. No drill took place in their presence, but they heard from the disciples that it did take place regularly, under the Gooroo's lieutenant, Sahib Singh, who was then absent at Loodiana."

Proceeding further, the account of the above verification party mentions: "On another occasion he told them that the English raj would soon cease; and that its roots had not struck very deep.... One day he told them that a Mahunt from Narowal (in the Amritsar district) had informed him for certain that cartridges, prepared in the same way as in 1857, were again to be distributed, and caps also filled with the same obnoxious



SUBA SAHIB SINGH

stuff. Ram Singh has two lieutenants at his home with him, Sahib Singh and Jowahir Singh. The former is a sharp, shrewd fellow and the drill instructor of the neighbourhood; the latter is merely a raving fanatic. Ram Singh is himself armed with a hatchet, all the others with sticks. No. 1 states that from what passed before him between his companion (the informer) and Ram Singh, he has no doubt that Sahib Singh did actually give Gaindah Singh the letters for Ram Singh, translations of which have been given above; and indeed, when they met Sahib Singh on the way home, he acknowledged as much in conversation with his companion. Nothing could be ascertained as to arms, but Ram Singh told them that when they were wanted, they would be forthcoming."

The verification party also ascertained that "the Gooroo intended visiting Umritsur in great state at the Dewallee (of 1863), and that his disciples, who were to assemble in great force there, evidently placed the most implicit confidence and obedience in their leader and were quite ready to lay down their lives for him."

It will be clear from above that in a broad way the report of Gainda Singh was confirmed by the verification party. It appears that the afore-said letters were actually given by Sahib Singh and were not forged by the spy himself. It is not possible to say definitely who wrote the letter containing the prophecy, but it may be thought that it was prepared by somebody at Bhaini (Sahib Singh or some other person on the basis of the book called '*Sau Sakhi*' during the absence of Baba Ram Singh from there). Sahib Singh, the chief Kuka leader at Bhaini Sahib at the time, seems to be so much seized of the importance of the newly discovered prophecy that he wanted it immediately to be conveyed to the master and to be known to the Kukas with him. Bhaini having been left by the Government completely unmolested hitherto and he himself being in the

dark about the recent change in the official attitude towards the Kukas, Sahib Singh could have the least suspicion that the letters he was giving to Gainda Singh would be delivered to the Government and not to their addressee, Baba Ram Singh. The afore-mentioned letter cannot and should not be taken to represent any authoritative position on the political views of the Kuka leader or his immediate and trustworthy followers. Nevertheless, its significance as giving a peep into the working of the Kuka mind in general in relation to the British Government cannot be written off.

Among the other reports, the following are significant and noteworthy.

Mani Ram, a Brahmin resident of Jullundur and a convert to Baba Ram Singh, stated[1] that "he has been at several of his meetings, but never saw any drilling ; and that the circumstances of their (Kukas) invariably standing up in line to go through some ceremonies before separating must have led to the idea of their drilling." He also asserted that "in common with all other Sikhs, doubtless, Ram Singh wishes their rule back again, but he does not preach this."

On the question of drilling, Dyal Singh, the Lumberdar, and Wazira, the Chowkidar, of Muthada (a village entirely converted by Ram Singh), stated that "drill often takes place a little way from the village ; and that Sergeant Buhal Singh, of the Hooshiarpur Police, with one or two discharged sepoys, instructs them[2]." Sergeant Buhal Singh, when questioned, admitted that he was a Kuka and that when on leave, paid visits to Bhaini Sahib, but denied that the Kukas had any drilling at night.[3]

Kaim Ali, the Extra-Assistant Commissioner of Batala, expressed the opinion that Ram Singh was a dangerous man who must be put under arrest. Lehna Singh, a

1. For. Pol. (A) March 1867, Cons. 111/112.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Naib Tehsildar of the same place, was, however, of the opposite view, but being a member of the prominent pujari family of the Durbar Sahib, Amritsar, he seems to be more concerned with showing Baba Ram Singh to be a self-conceited heretic[1].

A report was current about the same time, which mentioned Bhai Lal Singh of Amritsar (a famous disciple of Baba Balak Singh of Hazru) as saying that Bhai Maharaj Singh was the second *avtar* (reincarnation) and Baba Ram Singh the third *avtar* of Guru Gobind Singh[2]. This attempt to connect Ram Singh with Maharaj Singh, the greatest champion of the freedom of the Punjab during the Anglo-Sikh Wars, seemed to lay bare the inner import of the Kuka Movement and could not but be disconcerting to the Government.

On 31st May 1863 Capt. Menzies, Superintendent of Police, Amritsar, submitted to the office of the Inspector General, Police, Punjab what was said to be the information obtained by the Police Inspector Narain Singh in a casual conversation with a Kuka constable[3]. It was something very sensational, which put the authorities on guard. The constable had said that "before the festival of Dewali this year all Ram Singh's plans would be complete and an insurrection would break out in the city; that he had forty thousand followers in the Punjab, able-bodied men, ready to rise; and that the Guru had announced his ability to get arms and even guns when the time came." He acknowledged that "Ram Singh drilled his followers, but not at Amritsar, where they could not fail to be detected, and that he had a regular postal arrangement throughout the Punjab, from village to village, but never used the post office (of the Government)."

On the same day a report was sent to the Govern-

1. A memorandum of Major Younghusband, Officiating I.G., Police, dated 28th June 1863. *Kuka Documents*, 1863—1871, p. 3.

2. Ganda Singh, op. cit., p. 58—*Kuka Papers*, Capt. Menzies, 31st May 1863 ; also *Kuka Documents*, 1863—1871, p. 8.

3. Ibid.

ment by Maj. Farrington, Commissioner, Amritsar Division, saying that "there seems to be a very general opinion abroad that a demonstration of some sort will take place at Amritsar on the part of Ram Singh and his disciples at or about the time of the Dewali this year[1]."

After a careful study of all the above reports, the Officiating Inspector General, Police, Punjab, Mr. J.W. Younghusband, prepared a memorandum which was submitted to the Punjab Government on 28th June 1863. Two days after, the Officiating Secretary to the Lieut. Governor, Mr. T.D. Forsyth, wrote a long note on the subject explaining the decision of the Government.

After referring to the numerous reports received on Ram Singh and his followers, he argued:

"Ram Singh gives out that he does not seek an earthly kingdom, and his preaching, so far as has been ascertained, does not tend to sedition. But advantage is taken of his movement to circulate papers, whether true or false, in his name, which contain matter dangerous to the public welfare. Some of Ram Singh's followers have been reported as speaking seditious words, and there is undoubtedly an impression abroad that he is setting himself up as a future king, who is to drive the British out of the Punjab. Whatever be the intention, the result of his meetings and exhortations is to disturb the minds of the people, and already one slight disturbance between the orthodox and the new sect has been reported; and it is very generally believed that at the Dewali Fair at Amritsar there will be a grand meeting of the new sect, and some disturbance may be apprehended. Now, it appears from the fore-going that the assemblies of Ram Singh are liable to come under the category of unlawful, and thus to constitute the offence specified in Section 141, Penal Code."

On the basis of the above argument, the following steps were recommended :

1. *Kuka Documents*, 1863—1871. p. 9.

"In the present instance, Ram Singh and his followers are to be warned of the consequences apprehended, and are to be bound not to call any assembly at Amritsar. They are to have it so explained to them that their meetings, however harmless in themselves, lead to the belief that some harm is intended to the common peace and safety and that reports—true or false—are circulated and believed, which tend to unsettle men's minds. After this warning, should the assemblies be continued and any disturbance follow, Ram Singh and his disciples will be held responsible and be tried under the sections referring to offences against the public tranquillity. Ram Singh is to be directed to remain in his village, and the police will keep themselves informed of and report direct on his proceedings."

In pursuance of the Punjab Government's decision, Baba Ram Singh was placed under internment at his native place. It was a state of semi-imprisonment, because he was not allowed to transgress the limits of his village. A close watch was maintained over his activities by the police. A ban was put on all Kuka assemblies in the province. They were forbidden to have any gathering at Amritsar on the occasion of the Dewali festival. A warning was given to Ram Singh and his principal followers that they would be held responsible, if the Kukas indulged in any objectionable activities henceforward. Hazru, a great religious centre in the Attock district sacred to the revered memory of Baba Balak Singh, was also placed under police surveillance. The Assistant Superintendent of Police, Attock, Mr. Green, was issued strict instructions to keep a vigilant eye on the place and particularly to see whether there was any secret correspondence, verbal or written, going on between Hazru and Bhaini. This step, in the absence of any adverse report on the relations of the two places, goes far to indicate the extent to which the Government was scared by the Kuka danger at this time.

The severe restrictions imposed by the Government on the Kuka Movement had the result quite opposite of what it had hoped for. They turned out a blessing in disguise for the movement. There was now a much greater halo around the personality of Baba Ram Singh. The urge to go to Bhaini Sahib on a pilgrimage was intensified. Kukaism advanced apace. The numbers of the Kukas rose tremendously. In 1863 they were in thousands. After a few years they were in lacs. The abstract of the reports received by the Inspector General, Police, Punjab, regarding the conduct of the Kuka sect during the year 1867, mentions[1] : "Reports from all quarters show that the number of Ram Singh's disciples is on the increase." That this phenomenal rise of the Kuka Movement was largely due to the repressive policy of the Government is admitted by the Inspector General, Police, in his report for 1868. He says : "Whilst Ram Singh was in quasi-confinement at Bhainee, there was a charm of mystery and esotery about the man to which our espionage perhaps added a spice of fascinating persecution. All this was calculated to attract the susceptible. His Subas preached up their Guru as no mere man, but a very incarnation of the Deity, a co-equal with Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak, of sainted memory to every Sikh[2]."

Faced with the problem of strict official vigilance over all their activities, the Kukas thought it extremely necessary to strengthen their functional machinery. A reference has already been made in the last chapter to the evolution of a well-knit organisation reaching down from the centre to the village Sangat, in which the Subas, Naib Subas and Jathedars played the vital role of organisers, preachers and supervisors. Inter-communication and co-ordination, without letting the Government

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 2, p. 2454.

2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No.3, p. 2464.

know anything about this, being of fundamental importance to the efficiency of the organisation, an independent postal system was evolved. A kind of postal service on these lines seems to be present from the very beginning, for a clear hint to it was given in 1863 by a Kuka constable in service at Amritsar. Yet, it was the new situation that gave a fillip to it and led to its perfect state described in the official records. For instance, the following account is found in *"A Brief Account of the Kookah Sect*[1]."

"The Kookahs, or as they are sometimes called the "Sunt Khalsa" (Khalsa saints), have a private post of their own, which appears to be admirably organised. Confidential orders are circulated much in the same way as the fiery cross was carried through a Highland clan in Scottish bygone days. A Kookah, on the arrival at his village of another of the same sect with a despatch, at once leaves off, whatever work he may be engaged upon ; if in the midst of a repast, not another morsel is eaten ; he asks no questions, but taking the missive, starts off at a run and conveys it to the next relief, or to its destination. Important communications are sent verbally and are not committed to writing. In carrying messages they are said by Major Perkins to make great detours to avoid the Grand Trunk Road."

The same document refers to the danger inherent in the system in the following terms :

"There can be little doubt that this machinery has been introduced to work a religious reform, yet in the hands of designing and unscrupulous men it can easily be made an engine of political danger."

A similar warning was given sometime after by another European, Mr. Donovan, working in the Indian Railway Department[2]. His words "we ought to be very careful in this" obviously alluded to the dangerous political implications of the Kuka Movement.

1. For. Pol. (A) March 1867, Cons. 111/112.
2. For. Pol. (A) September 1868, Cons. 383-385.

The above dak system marked a great achievement of the Kuka organisational capacity and seriousness of purpose. It saved them from the secret agents of the English as well as from the censorship of the postal authorities. It showed their great discipline as well as their faith in the significance of their mission. It is a measure of the secret efficiency of the system that, though long in operation, it remained unknown to the Government till the year 1867. Major Perkins was perhaps the first official to make the discovery, a reference to which is available in the Government report for the year 1867[1].

For three years, 1863-1866, it seems the Government had little to worry about the Kuka Movement. It may be that the Kukas now functioned in a very carefully guarded manner or that under the impact of the restrictions imposed by the Government, the movement was soft-peddled for some time. However, gradually its activities revived, breaking the complacency of the Government. From 1866 onward the Kukas were particularly active in their campaign against tombs, graves and cremation marks, which elicited worshipful devotion from many a benighted and misguided person. The more ardent among them took the law into their hands and committed several acts of aggression in the districts of Lahore, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Gujranwala and Gurdaspur. Some of them were arrested and awarded varying terms of imprisonment. Later on, the aggression element in the campaign was abandoned at the instance of Ram Singh, because it tended to lower their stock with the masses. In the words of the report[2] of the Inspector General, Police for the year 1868, it "created an impression in the minds of the people that the Kooka teaching must be bad, if it led to such results; and a strong prejudice against his (Ram

1. For. Pol. (A) March 1867, Cons. 111/112.

2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 3, p. 2464.

Singh's) doctrines was created.

But the above campaign was only one aspect of the revived Kuka activity. In 1866 the informer Gainda Singh made another report[1] on the designs of the Kukas on his return from a secret mission to their head-quarters :

"On arrival at Bhainee I met, amongst others, one Bhuggut Singh, of Loodiana, who was a news-carrier of Ram Singh. Ram Singh has nightly interviews with Gooroo Govind Singh. It is the order for each of the Kookahs to have a good strong axe. They are ready for a disturbance and have petitioned Ram Singh for orders, who replied he would give them before the Dewallee. In event of Ram Singh's death, Sahib Singh (a Souba or Lieutenant) is to succeed him......Mungal Singh, Jaghiredar of Raipore (Loodiana) is one who has promised assistance in event of a rising. Ram Singh regards the arms of all the Sikhs in the British service as his own, and considers it certain we shall have a revolt, if Sahib Singh becomes head of the sect. The Kookahs are very enthusiastic and are willing to obey Ram Singh implicitly."

In the same year Mr. R.G. Taylor, Commissioner and Superintendent, Ambala, made two reports to the Punjab Government, one in June and the other in September, in which he made out a strong plea for an immediate assault upon the Kuka sect.[2] A few extracts from his second report are given below:

"You will remember that in June last I reported demi-officially, for His Honor the Lieutenant Governor's information, that Ram Singh of Bainee had with his followers been conducting himself in such a manner that I had thought it advisable to reimpose the restriction on his liberty, which had been partially relaxed in accordance with the tenor of your letter, No. 356, of the 19th

1. For. Pol. (A) March 1867, Cons. 111/112.
2. For. Pol. (A) October 1866, Cons. 18/20.

March 1866. In your demi-official reply of the 16th of June you conveyed His Honor's sanction to the arrangement I had made. I have now to report that I have ever since closely watched the proceedings of the sect and have gathered opinions from all quarters about them.

"The result has been the same throughout, namely, that the opinion of one and all has been that the sect is a mischievous one and that its existence and especially its rapid increase threatens disturbance sooner ar later.

"His Honor is aware of my views regarding the dangerous tendency of a combination of this sort, and he will see that I have not been hasty in forming an opinion of this one. I am distinctly of opinion, however, that the time is come for taking serious notice of the proceedings of this agitator[1] (for this is his real character as much as it is of any head centre) and his sect. I am, therefore, of opinion that the following measures should be adopted at once :

1. That Ram Singh be arrested and removed far away from the scene of his present machinations. This might be done via Lahore and Mooltan to Bombay, or by Delhi to Calcutta, but the former would be preferable. In the same way I would for the present arrest and remove his lieutenants.
2. I would forbid Kukaism in the ranks of the Police and Army. It would remain for consideration whether men who have already become Kukas in those bodies should be got rid of, but at any rate I would have no more of it in the ranks. It is a secret combination, as the watchword cannot be divulged and as such

1. It may be pointed out here that in his capacity of the Political Agent of Cis-Sutlej States, the Commissioner of Ambala issued instructions immediately to the State Governments that all Kukas be listed and watched and all their propagandism be banned. Nabha Records File, entitled *Kukaha-Tahrikat-i-Maghaviana*.

wholly inappropriate among the servants of the state."

"It is my thorough belief that these lads mean war sooner or later, and I strongly recommend my Government to be beforehand with them."

"I recommend that the Loodiana Fort be occupied with safe troops at this juncture; it is an important little fortress and sits on the headquarters of Kukaism protecting a valuable town."

The last lines of the letter are taken from the report of John Newton, a Christian missionary and are mentioned here to throw light on the basic character of the movement. They are :

"...and the impression I get from the whole is that the new Gooroo has no genuine religious sentiments—the whole drift of his reformation being apparently to consolidate the power of Sikhism with a view to political ends. I think it possible that this was not the original intention, but I fully believe that it has been the result, and further am of the opinion that it was the natural result of any religious revival among a war-like race panting to recover their much-loved land and to restore the glories of their sect. Ram Singh may have commenced as a wild religious reformer on the fashion of Nanak, but his stirring lieutenants are hurrying him into a more near imitation of the war-like Gooroo Govind."

The Punjab Government wrote back to Mr. Taylor on 18th September 1866. It did not agree that there were as yet "sufficient grounds for the arrest of Ram Singh." It argued[1] :

"The evidence of such men as Moonshee Abdool Nubee Khan, Moulvie Rujjub Ali and the Inspector Imdad Ali is no doubt of great value ; His Honor is inclined himself to believe that the views entertained by the Reverend Mr. Newton are sound, as there can

1. For. Pol. (A) October 1866, No. 18/20-T.H. Thornton, Secy. to Government of Punjab to R.G. Taylor.

be no doubt that a wide-spread, and constantly increasing fraternity, of a more or less secret character, apparently well-organised and devotedly attached to their chief, must contain the elements of mischief. But, on the other hand, no overt acts of a disloyal character have as yet been attributed to them, much less proved, while on the occasions when the Police have been brought in contact with them, their demeanour appears to have been much more orderly than that of their opponents."

The Punjab Government forwarded, on 18th September, the letter of Mr. R.G. Taylor with a copy of its own reply to the Government of India. While doing so, it made a recommendation that a repeating station might be set up at Ludhiana on a temporary basis. The Supreme Government wrote back to the Punjab Government on 27th September[1] :—

"In reply I (Secretary) am directed to state the Government of India fully concurs in the views of the Lieut. Governor. In the absence of any overt acts and of any disloyal conduct on the part of this sect, it would not be expedient to arrest their leader, Ram Singh; but it is advisable that their movements should be carefully watched and constantly reported on. In particular, it is desirable that every effort should be made to ascertain whether they have collected or are collecting any arms. Either a Sikh Chief or a man of approved loyalty may be deputed to make private enquiries on the subject."

The reply of the Central Government contained the assurance that "as a matter of precaution, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief will be moved to detach two companies of a Goorkha Regiment as a garrison for the Fort of Ludhiana," and "the Home Department will be requested to consider whether Ludhiana may not be made a repeating station as a temporary arrangement."

On 8th October the Government of India, realising

1. For, Pol. (A) October 1866, Nos. 18/20.

that the matter deserved to be brought to the notice of the Home Government, sent up all the documents of their correspondence with the Punjab Government bearing on the subject of "the existence and serious progress among the Sikhs of a nominally religious sect, called Kookas[1]."

The Secretary of State for India replied to the Government of India on 31st May 1867 making the following significant observation[2] :—

"This Report, which you have forwarded without remark, appears to show that the Kookahs have ulterior political objects of a dangerous character; and while I do not at present see reason to urge on your Government any active interference with the proceedings of Ram Singh and his associates, I must express the hope of Her Majesty's Government that these persons may be quietly but very narrowly watched."

A copy of this letter was sent by the Government of India to the Punjab Government, which in its turn circulated it among all the important subordinate officials. The direction of thc Home Government formed, henceforward, the key-note of the official policy towards the Kukas. The Police Department was charged with the responsibility to watch and report on their conduct. At the end of each year, all the papers were documented and placed, with the remarks of the Inspector General, Police, before the Punjab Government. Later on, the whole material was despatched for the information of the Central and Home Governments.

The above policy of over-all strict vigilance was supplemented by the adoption of a few concrete precautionary measures, namely, the establishment of a telegraph office and stationing of a garrison at Ludhiana, screening of Kukas and the stoppage of their fresh enlistment in the Armed and Police Forces. On suspicion that there might be some Kukas among the Sikhs of the

1. For. Pol. (A) 8th October 1866, Cons. 171.
2. For. Pol. (A) February 1868, Cons. 202-203

14th Regiment Native Infantry, a thorough scrutiny was carried out by its Commandant, Lieut. Col. G. Ross and the result reported to the Commander-in-Chief. The latter wrote back[1] on 29th November 1866 saying that he "approves of the precautionary measures you have adopted with respect to "Kookaism" and to prevent the possibility of men of that sect enlisting in future in the Regiment under your Command."

Earlier on 22nd September, the Assistant Commissioner of Ludhiana had informed the Commandant of the above Regiment about how to distinguish a Kuka from other Sikhs. As if this was not enough, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, Mr. C.P. Elliot addressed another letter on 26th September to the same gentleman. He wrote[2] :

"Your letter, No. 242, dated 17th instant, was answered by my Assistant during my temporary absence. I wish to add to the information that I consider the "Kookas" a dangerous political sect and not only as they profess to be religious revivalists. It is in my opinion very desirable that they should not be enlisted, or allowed to make converts, in regiments."

While, as we have seen above, the policy of vigilance was intensified, it was decided in early 1867 to relax the restrictions on the movements of Baba Ram Singh and his lieutenants. The following grounds were advanced for this decision[3] :—

1. There was nothing in the conduct of Ram Singh or in the doctrines advocated by him to justify his further detention as a prisoner.

2. His detention, instead of tending to repress the growth of his doctrines, tended to give him the influence and importance of a persecuted martyr and to induce in the minds of his followers a feeling of hostility

1. For. Pol. (A) January 1867, Cons. 23.
2. Ibid.
3. For. Pol. (A) May 1867, Cons. 20-21.

to the English Government, and of doubt as to its principles of religious toleration.

3. That, at the gathering at Anandpur, his professions of peaceable conduct would be put to a strong test, while at the same time the Government was in a position at once to deal with any disturbance which might arise.

To the above three arguments of the Punjab Government, the following one was added by the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana[1]:

4. If a row did take place (at Anandpur), it would give the authorities a hold upon Ram Singh and a ground for proceeding against him, should it be considered advisable to do so.

It should be clear from above that the relaxation policy was motivated by deeper and far weightier reasons than the apparently peaceable conduct of the Kuka leader since 1863. While recommending permission for Baba Ram Singh to visit Anandpur, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana made it clear that what he wanted was merely a conditional permission.

The orderly way in which the visits of Baba Ram Singh and his followers to Anandpur (March 1867) and Amritsar (October 1867) passed off, encouraged the Government to go ahead with removing the remaining curbs upon their movements. Perhaps, the greatest contribution to this orderliness was of the Government itself. There were excellent arrangements at both places on both occasions. The officials on the spot handled the situation most tactfully. For instance, but for the discreet management of the situation by Col. McAndrew, Deputy Inspector General, Police, and Major Perkins, Deputy Commissioner, Hoshiarpur, there would certainly have been a serious breach of peace at Anandpur[2]. All the same, the accommodating attitude of Baba Ram

1. For. Pol. (A) May 1867, Cons. 20-21-Memorandum by Deputy Commissioner.

2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 2, p. 2459.

Singh was no meagre factor contributing to the peaceful atmosphere prevailing in the course of his visits. The Government was greatly gratified to learn from the official reports that the Kukas had on the whole conducted themselves peaceably. Some of these reports, like that of Mian Fazl Hussain, a Police Inspector commissioned to watch the Kukas at Anandpur from close quarters, not only expressed great admiration of the Kuka sect and its teachings, but also endeavoured to dispel doubts about its political leanings. On the latter aspect Mian Fazl Hussain's views were[1] : "After a personal interview with Ram Singh I am of opinion that he in no way acts in opposition to the British Government ; but some of his Soobas (Lieutenants) are bad men, who injure his reputation."

The accommodating attitude of Baba Ram Singh and the resultant peaceful passing off of his visits to the two most prominent of the Sikh religious centres did not completely quieten the fears of the authorities, for in the official report for the year 1867 the Inspector General, Police writes[2] : "Though I am of opinion that no restraint need yet be placed on the movements of Ram Singh, yet I consider that his proceedings and those of his Lieutenants require to be closely and constantly watched." However, the official reports for the following two years generally breathe an air of gratification over the seemingly declining tendency of the movement, the decline being attributed to the Government's policy of relaxation, to the aggressive attacks of the Kukas upon tombs, graves and smadhs and to the "action of time," that is to say, "the thing getting stale", "the fire of enthusiasm growing cold", and "the zeal of propagandists sensibly abating[3]."

1. Ibid.

2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 2.

3. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 3, p. 2465 ; Appendix A, No. 4, p. 2469.

That the official reports for 1868 and 1869 did not go deep enough is evidenced by the two letters of Mr. J. Donovan, a railway employee working at Doraha, addressed to the Governor General, the second being to Lord John Lawrence by name. Both of them were written in September 1868, the first on the 7th and the second on the 30th. In the first letter, Donovan wrote[1] :

"A native[2] of this country (Punjab), who is now with me working here, has just brought to light a most dreadful thing now going on in the country.

"He says there is a new sect just forming up into a very large and strong body, called the Kookas ; one of the chief members of this body is a man well known in the Punjab ; his name is Ram Singh : this man is now in the Malwa country collecting more followers; at present he has collected two lakhs of persons to rebel against us and finally to expel us from the Punjab. Ram Singh, moreover, has made arrangements with some relation of the Rajah of Puttialla's that if he will also render aid, the two forces combined together would help to take our 'raj' from us in the Punjab and would thus establish the Sikh power again and make him King of the Kookas. An insurrection is expected to take place some time in the early part of the next year."

In the second letter, Donovan reported some alleged utterances of Baba Ram Singh, from which a few lines are given below[3] :

> "Brothers, ye all know that by the word of our God and according to the doctrines of Gooroo Gobind Singh we have met at this time to consult about the best mode of expelling and putting to torture all the Christians in this country, India (the land of the Hindoos)."

1. For. Pol. (A) September 1868, Cons. 383.
2. According to Donovan, this native was a Kuka Suba who had intimate connections with the Kukas.
3. For. Pol. (A) October 1868, Cons. 197.

"I, Ram Singh, am sent by him (Guru Gobind Singh) to deliver the Christians into the hands of our tribes (the Sikhs)."

"Hear ye all noble Sikhs now here present that I am come to deliver you from the yoke of the Christians, whom we have served and we shall fight for independence and I will give over the country to the Sikhs, who shall rule as final Kings, and that, moreover, my God has told me that the country belongs to the Hindoos and that Christians are no longer to keep it, because they kill and eat cows, and it is therefore lawful to rebel against them."

Mr. Donovan wanted the grave Kuka menace to be considered in the background of the deteriorating situation on the north-west of India :

"Let not those behind rise in open revolt against us, when we pursue our enemies in front."

Donovan also gave a forceful suggestion to the Government :

"For my part all Ram Singh's preaching, his new doctrines about not smoking, not to tell lies, to abstain from wines and cruelty, and other such-like things of his preaching, is only a sort of a blind : There is very great danger in this country now, and all the Kookas together with Ram Singh better be hung up at once."

Again :

"Let us rule with a rod of iron, knowing they are heathens and a Godless people. The heart of every Briton burns when we see the ingratitude of the blacks... The plant is yet tender and can be bent at pleasure ; hereafter it will not yield. This case should be dealt with in a doubly severe manner than the Fenian insurrection."

Even after making the necessary allowance for the tendency to overdraw the picture natural to a panicked mind, there is enough in the substance of the above two letters of Donovan to indicate the underground planning of the Kuka leadership about this time.

A striking example of the defiant Kuka attitude, which, though isolated, gives some support to the fears of Donovan, is afforded by the following incident. A Kuka fair was planned to be held in March 1869 at the village Tharajwala (Ferozepur District) under the leadership of a prominent Kuka, Mastan Singh. A batch of Kukas on the way to the site, indignant at being shadowed by the Deputy Inspector Dewan Baksh, set upon him. "His sword was damaged and taken from him ; his horse was struck with a spear ; one Beli Singh either struck him with an axe or a stick and Munna Singh threw a spear at him. A constable, who accompanied the Deputy Inspector, was assaulted ; his sword broken and taken from him and his coat cut through by a blow from the blade[1]." Dewan Baksh reported, rightly or wrongly, that the party of the Kukas "used most seditious language and proclaimed the Khalsa reign, setting all authority at defiance[2]." Upon the receipt of this report, Mr. Turton Smith, District Superintendent, Police, Ferozepur, marched towards Tharajwala at the head of a strong police force. When he reached the place, he sent the Inspectors Kutab Shah and Ali Mualla to the unruly Kukas to tell them to surrender themselves. Mastan Singh, the head Kuka, "demanded the Inspector's horse as "Nuzrana" and ridiculed him for believing the English could assist him. Mastan Singh further advised him to desert the falling Government and throw in his lot with the rising Kuka cause." Ali Mualla's efforts were "simply rewarded with showers of bricks[3]." At last, the Kukas were overpowered and disarmed and forty four of them were taken in custody and brought to Mukatsar, where they were put on trial for rioting by the Deputy Com-

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284—Appendix A, No. 4, p. 2466.

2. Ibid. There is a reference here that Mastan Singh disapproved of Baba Ram Singh's slow tactics and wished to do something immediately to restore their independence.

3. Ibid.

missioner, Mr. Knox. As a result, some of them were imprisoned for varying terms[1].

Much more important than the above rioting incident was the revelation, in the month of November 1869, of Baba Ram Singh's secret efforts to have his followers trained militarily in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. A reference to this is found in the official report for the year 1869. It mentions[2]:

> "In November reports were received the Maharaja of Kashmere was raising a Kooka regiment and that each recruit received a certificate from Ram Singh before setting out for Kashmere."

The official report for the year 1870 brings out even greater details of the Kuka enlistment in the armed forces of Jammu and Kashmir. Another interesting development revealed by it was the despatch of a Kuka mission to the ruler of Nepal. Commenting on this "novel phase of Kookaism" the report expressed deep regret over the absence of any prohibitory law on such a matter[3]:

> "It is perhaps to be regretted that there is no legislation such as seems to be contemplated by Section 33 of the Foreign Enlistment Act ; that the slight protection afforded by Section 12 of 59 Geo. III, Chapter 69, is abandoned, instead of being made applicable to all foreign Asiatic States, whether at peace or war with their neighbours, as it is obviously not to the advantage of any Government that a religious leader should possess the opportunity of passing his disciples through the ranks of regiments from which they can desert whenever their spiritual guide may consider their temporal aid necessary to forward his political aims."

1. Ibid.
2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 4, p. 2469.
3. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 5, p. 2471.

At the end of the report there was a note of warning :

> "Provided the service be short, a large number of Kookas may be drilled and disciplined to certain extent in foreign armies without any of the risks which accompany such proceedings in British territory, and it is certain that they remove themselves by enlisting under Native Princes very effectually from any close espionage."

In view of the above efforts of the Kuka leadership to build up foreign contacts, it would appear that the calm, which the Government records of the period speak of and which the eye of the superficial observer met, was indeed a false calm. The Government was either not well-informed about what was going on beneath the surface or failed to size up the situation properly. The events of the years immediately following clearly proved that what was called calm or "thanda[1]" in 1869 was really the proverbial calm before the storm.

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284-Appendix A, No. 4, p. 2469.

CHAPTER V

KUKA OUTBREAK

THE so-called calm, which marked the period 1868-1870, ended in 1871 with the Kuka attacks on the butchers of Amritsar and Raikot, followed, not long afterwards, by much bigger raids on Malodh and Maler Kotla. They were now openly on the war-path.

Apparently, their aim was cow-protection, a long established cultural value of Indian civilisation. But the question is : was it merely that and no more ? A careful analysis of the situation prevailing then may be necessary to answer this question. Being given to beef-eating, the British, when they first entered the Punjab in 1846, wanted the same freedom to kill cows and eat their flesh here as they had enjoyed elsewhere in the country. This caused great perturbance to those who were religiously opposed to it. There was actually a cow row in April 1846, when a European artilleryman standing guard at the outer gate of the artillery barracks at Lahore slashed three or four out of a herd of cows passing that way. The more active participants in this open demonstration of public resentment were immediately arrested. Of them, two, Dutt Brahmin and Rullia Misar, were executed, two were sent for confinement into British provinces and two were put in irons, their faces blackened and exposed to public view to serve as an example to the people at large. The source of all this trouble, the European sentry, was merely "warned to be more careful how he used his sword in future[1]." Henceforward, the British had no

1. Sir John Littler to Henry Lawrence, May 22, 1846—quoted in J.M. Mahajan, *Circumstances leading to the Annexation of the Punjab*, p. 41.

trouble about getting beef at Lahore; only they were now more careful and carried on the procurement of their requirements quietly without making any fuss about it.

As at Lahore, the stay of Europeans at Amritsar about the same time led to the killing of kine, and there were several complaints about it. Realizing that these complaints, if not redressed in time, might arouse the passions of the Sikhs, Amritsar being their Holy City, the Governor General issued orders altogether prohibiting the slaughter of kine in this city. The order given below was engraved on a copper plate and placed at the entrance of the Durbar Sahib[1]:

"The priests of Amritsar having complained of annoyances, this is to make known to all concerned that by order of the Governor General, British subjects are forbidden to enter the temple called the Durbar, or its precincts at Amritsar or indeed any temple with their shoes on.

"Kine are not to be killed at Amritsar, nor are the Seikhs to be molested or in any way to be interfered with.

"Shoes are to be taken off at the Bhoonga at the corner of the tank and no person is to walk round the tank with his shoes on."

Lahore. Henry H. Lawrence,
March 24th, 1847. Resident.

But the concession in the matter of kine killing was only reserved for Amritsar. There was no prohibition of it elsewhere. Indeed, this concession to Amritsar was a concession to the Sikhs, who were still, even though nominally, the rulers of the Punjab. The ban on cow-slaughter was a time-honoured law of the Khalsa Government. That law was now violated and treated

1. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A).

as dead. The concession to Amritsar was offered merely as a sop to the injured feelings of the Sikhs. Even this sop was abandoned when the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 made the British unchallenged masters of the situation, for immediately after Maharaja Dalip Singh was deposed, the Government of India declared that for the future "no one should be allowed to interfere with the practice, by his neighbour, of customs which that neighbour's religion permits." The Board of Administration "ruled that the prohibition, which had formerly been maintained solely out of deference to a Sikh sovereign, must now be removed and that in every large town a spot for the shambles and butchers' shops should be appointed, but that particular care should be taken not to select the neighbourhood of any Hindoo religious building and on no account should beef be exposed for sale in shops within the towns, although slaughtered outside, and that Mussulmans should be severely punished for ostentatiously parading what they knew would offend their Hindoo neighbours[1]." These orders were carried out in Amritsar by Mr. C.B. Saunders in 1849, who selected a shop at a distance from the city and caused an enclosure to be erected there and forbade the sale of the flesh of kine in the city in shops or in an open manner.

How could we account for all that ? Were the British motivated by solicitude for the interests of the Muslims ? Undoubtedly, in and about 1849 the Muslims were closer to the Government than the Sikhs and the Hindus. From 1846 onward it was a well-calculated policy of the British to drive a wedge between the Muslims and the non-Muslims and to win the former's goodwill. As the result of this policy, the Muslims of the Punjab helped the British rather than the Sikhs during the 2nd Anglo-Sikh War. But could we, on this basis, say that removing the ban on cow-slaughter was a discreet measure of the British to reward the past

1. Ibid.

services of the Muslims and to ensure the continuance of their goodwill in future ? There is no direct evidence to prove it, yet it may be presumed that such a thing as this was not foreign to their calculations ; nay, it positively entered into the formulation of state policy from 1857 onward. All the same, we do not come across any articulated demand to this effect on the part of the Punjabi Musalmans.

The introduction of kine-killing in 1846 was the outcome of the Britishers' own dietary requirements. Consequently, in 1849, when they had the feeling of being strongly entrenched, they lost no time in doing away with the special concession accorded to Amritsar, the only place where Europeans were denied the pleasure of beef eating. The Muslims of the Punjab had not eaten beef now for about three quarters of a century, and had become accustomed to a diet free of it. It was not they so much as the British themselves who were anxious to have arrangements for the availability of beef. Considered in this light, the principle of equal freedom of diet for all religious communities implied in the afore-mentioned Government announcement of 1849 will appear to be no more than a camouflage for giving beef-eating facilities to the Europeans. Members of the Muslim community were granted contracts to set up shops of beef, partly because the Muslims had no objections in the matter and partly for the reason that the work could not be taken up by any European consistently with his dignity.

The fact that the introduction of kine killing was the work of the British was driven home by the way they backed the butchers engaged on the business. In 1864 and even twice or thrice before that, there were some slight disturbances caused by the Amritsar butchers' audacity to sell beef openly in the city. On all these occasions they were let off either scot-free or with nominal fines. The partiality of the authorities was brought home far more convincingly from the begin-

ning of 1871. By that time the evil had assumed enormous proportions, as may be clear from the following extract from the official records[1]:

"During the intervening period many causes have contributed to reopen the difficulty. The tax on the slaughter of cattle had been farmed for three years, and the contract taken by one Ali, a well-known butcher at Amritsar. This year Ali had associated with himself some of the other butchers and the greater number of sharers in the contract led to great efforts being made to stimulate the sale of beef. Partly, too, owing to the high price of grain and the cheapness of beef caused by the draught and want of fodder which made cattle-owners anxious to sell and partly to the fact that thousands of Kashmiris have been thrown out of work by the war between France and Prussia, the consumption of beef among the poorer classes has enormously increased and though there does not appear to have been any systematic violation of the rules, it is certain that beef has been brought openly and carelessly into the city to the disgust of the Hindoo community."

Against the offending butchers several complaints were lodged with the authorities, but no stern action was taken. Only nominal punishments were inflicted, which, too, not unoften were remitted on appeal. Abhorred by the rapidity with which the killing of kine was increasing and convinced of the partiality of the officials in the matter, the Hindu and Sikh inhabitants of the city started an agitation having for its object the complete suppression of cow-slaughter in or about the holy city. Several affrays took place between the two communities during the months of April and May 1871. In dealing with the situation, the authorities again showed partiality. A police guard was placed over the slaughter-house with effect from the 6th May and it remained there till the end of the month[2]. On the other hand, on 9th May

1. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A).
2. Ibid.

twenty two Hindus were prosecuted, while on 15th May Bhai Deva Singh, a disciple of Bhai Bir Singh of Naurangabad, was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment for taking on 24th April a beef-bone into the Durbar Sahib and placing it in front of the Holy Book with the object of arousing the slumbering conscience of the people against the spreading evil.

In a bid to find a permanent solution of the communal tension, all the Indian members, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim, of the Municipal Committee of the city decided between themselves that the slaughter-house contract with the butchers should not be renewed for the next year. At this the high officials of the district were greatly upset. An urgent meeting of the Committee was fixed by the Deputy Commissioner Mr. F.M. Birch for 22nd May to discuss the issue afresh. In the meantime, the Officiating Commissioner Mr. W.G. Davies had arrived from Gurdaspur and commenced a round of talks with the leading citizens of all the communities, telling them frankly that, no matter what the Hindus and Muslims thought on the matter, the Government were determined to continue the slaughter-house. Later, while addressing the meeting of the Municipal Committee, he repeated the same thing. As the result of his intervention, the Muslim members of the Committee sided the Europeans and a new resolution was passed favouring the renewal of the contract. No Hindu member voted for the resolution. Some of them refrained from voting, while others voted against it.

Yet, nobody among the authorities paid any heed to their feelings. As a protest they declared a social and economic boycott of the Muslims. The Hindu 'kaseras' (tinkers) refused to buy any more old copper vessels from the Muhammadans, while the Hindus in general decided, unlike in the past, to do without, on the Nimani Ikadshi Day falling on 31st May, the newly-made earthen pots prepared specially for the occasion by the Muslim potter

class. On complaints being made to them, the authorities exercised their influence to restore normalcy but without doing anything to heal the wounded feelings of the Hindus. On the contrary, they were lacerated further by the acquittal on 2nd June of the butchers, who had been earlier prosecuted on Hindu complaints. Before leaving for Gurdaspur, the Officiating Commissioner held a grand durbar on 3rd June at the Town Hall, where in a specially prepared Urdu speech he emphasised[1] that "the same system will continue for the future, but under proper control and supervision, that is to say, the flesh will not be allowed to be sold openly in public places like other commodities. But if any one brings it into the city decorously covered up in large or small baskets, he is at liberty so to do." He assured that "recognizances have been taken from the butchers that regulations shall in no way be infringed."

Giving a stern warning he said that "it is needless to say what the laws are and what punishment those will receive who infringe them."

He reminded the people of how "those who have infringed the orders of Government in this respect, as also those who have taken the law into their own hands with the design of altogether putting an end to the slaughter of kine, have been punished."

Summing up the impression produced on the Hindu minds by the various official acts, Mr. Birch, the Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar, admitted a few days later[1]:

"The general result of the measures was adverse to Hindu interests. It could scarcely have been otherwise. The Hindu population felt itself failed and its members have presumed to satisfy their feelings of revenge."

The result could scarcely have been otherwise, if the official attitude was what is reflected in Mr. Birch's own

1. Ibid. Maj. W.G. Davies to the Offg. Secy. to the Punjab Government, dated 21st June 1871.

2. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A)-Major F.M. Birch to W.G. Davies, dated Ist July 1871.

statement of the 15th May 1871 given below :

"I think[1] the Hindoos are too pretentious in asking for the sale of beef in the city to be stopped. Their disorderly conduct does not entitle them to any extra consideration."

Amritsar being the religious capital of the Sikhs, the quickly mounting activities of the cow-slaughterers there created a widespread dissatisfaction among the Sikhs as well as among the Hindus living in the Punjab and even outside. The slaughter-houses, wherever they were, began to be regarded with the concern that had never been known before in the recent past. The problem was not merely to save Amritsar from the pollution, but to eradicate the whole evil, wherever its ugly head was seen. It was, however, not a simple question of making a few Muslim butchers abandon their nefarious trade, because the evil was the product of a deliberate official policy. Besides, those engaged on the trade were backed by the formidable power of the British Government. The selfish and the cowardly among the dissatisfied were too cringing or terrified to incur the displeasure of the Government. It was left to the followers of Baba Ram Singh to defy it and to sacrifice their precious lives in the process.

The Kuka leadership seems well aware of all the issues involved in the problem of stopping the kine-killing. To them an attack on the butchers was, in fact, an attack on the Government. It was, therefore, not an act of religious fanaticism, but a step forward in their national struggle against the new rulers of the country. Mr. Macnabb put it unequivocally in his memorandum of the 4th November 1871, where he said[2] : "I consider the slaughter

1. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A).

2. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132. See also Home Judicial (A) July 1872, Progs. 212-220. Mr. T.D. Forsyth wrote in Para 4 of his letter to the Government of India, dated 6th July 1872 : "But the cry which was then raised of death to the slayers of kine, had but one deep significance for all Sikhs and Hindoos. It meant nothing less than the beginning of an attempt to restore the Sikh rule."

by strangers of butchers carrying on their trade in places expressly sanctioned by the British Government was a direct defiance of our authority and I submit that any failing in carrying out to its uttermost the punishment of such defiance is dangerous to our power."

The motive of Baba Ram Singh in this connection was clearly put forth by His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala in his letter[1] to the Punjab Government, dated 12th February 1872. He wrote : "In exciting this prejudice his motive was (as under the religious pretext the cartridge prejudice subverted and put into commotion the whole of India in 1857) that by means of this ignitable match he may stir up and excite the feelings of the Hindu community (including nobility, gentry and the troops) to sympathise and stand up in support of this common cause of hatred against the rulers of the country, anticipating a result from this confusion that in every class and grade of the community he would be held with respect and awe and thus establish a powerful sway over them, of which he was long in earnest."

The Kuka motivation is also evident from Suba Brahma Singh's (an ex-mutinous sepoy of 1857) speeches in the district of Gujranwala shortly after the Kuka attack on the butchers of Amritsar in June 1871. According to the report of the Deputy Superintendent, Police, Gujranwala, Brahma Singh asked the Kukas not to build houses, not to lend money to others and to keep as much cash as possible. The idea was that they should be prepared for war or disturbance, which was about to break out at the command of their Guru, Ram Singh. He warned the people[2] : "War will commence in Kartik and Maghar of 1928 (October and November 1871)." He also informed the Kukas that the Maharaja of Nepal, other Rajas and the Sardars of the Punjab "had also subordinated themselves to Guru Ram Singh and would help

1. Home Judicial (A) June 1872, Progs. 107-111.
2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284, p. 2495.

with arms, men and money". In one of his speeches he uttered the following words[1]:

"See brothers Namdharis, Har Gobind Sahib (meaning Guru Gobind Singh) has become Sat Guru and appeared again mounted on horseback. He has vindicated his authority at Amritsar in the slaughter house, his followers on that occasion being the Sikhs, who had, in former times, become martyrs for their faith. Have patience, many such things will occur again, and if the present rulers of our country should dare to desecrate it still more, and interfere with our ceremonies or meddle with us in any way, then it will happen in many places. But there is no fear for us. The days for the fulfilment of our prophecies and the restoration of the Khalsa Raj are close at hand. Be ready and faithful. Recently, a holy brother was in trance for two days and saw vision in which the village of Bhaini appeared to him surrounded by a large Sikh army. Guru Ram Singh led them in person and proclaimed that they were the army of martyrs, destined to restore the Sikh faith and supremacy in its original purity and integrity."

A reference to Baba Ram Singh's own views on the matter is found in a memorandum[2] of Mr. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, dated 24th July 1871:

"The approver and the witness, by whom many of his statements are corroborated, state that when Ram Singh was at Raisur, a few weeks before the Amritsar business, mention was made to him that one Kuka had murdered another in the Ferozepore District, whereupon Ram Singh, in a speech or sermon, upbraided the followers for killing each other, and asked them if they knew of no enemies of their religion whom they could kill[2], and that he went on to allude to the defilement of the holy place at Amritsar by the presence there of the

1. Ibid.
2. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A); Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

slaughterers of cows. Several of his followers cried out—"If you order it, we will kill the butchers." Ram Singh replied, "Don't do any thing in hurry, the time has not yet come."

Now, why did he want time ? Only for killing the butchers at Amritsar, who were so few and could be finished in no time ? Obviously, he wanted thorough preparation to be made before any step was taken. The Amritsar butchers were not the only ones to be decimated. There were butchers scattered all over the Punjab, who would have to be destroyed, if success was to be achieved. But above all were to be tackled the helpers and protectors of these people, the British, who would use all their power and resources in their defence. Under the circumstances, an attack on the butchers would, in reality, be an attack on the British Government.

MURDER OF BUTCHERS AT AMRITSAR

The hint of Baba Ram Singh at Raisur, in spite of his injunction against hurry, was taken up by his followers in all seriousness. McAndrew was later on told by Kuka Gulab Singh that for them "no time or place could be more favourable (than Amritsar) to commence the butcher-killing movement[1]." A band of ten Kukas—Fateh Singh of Amritsar, Beela Singh Sandhu of Narli, Hakim Singh Patwari, of Maura, Lehna Singh Tarkhan, of Amritsar, Jhanda Singh of Thathi, Lenha Singh and Mehar Singh, of Lopoke, Lachhman Singh and Bhagwan Singh, of Mehran and Gulab Singh—was shortly afterwards formed to destroy the butchers of Amritsar.

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

The statement of Gyani Rattan Singh reads differently. He told Cowan that Ram Singh said at Khote with reference to the fight between two Kuka parties there "Why do you fight among yourselves and injure poor people ? If you are men, why do you not fight with men who are powerful (zorawar) and who will hang you, if you are defeated ?"

Also see the Memorandum of Lieut. Col. McAndrew—Vide Home Judicial, June 1872, 112-132.

Weapons were supplied by Lal Singh, a police constable serving at Amritsar. A '*Hom*' ceremony with recitations from '*Chandi Path*' was most solemnly gone through in the house of Lehna Singh of Amritsar, at which prayers were offered for the success of the enterprize. And then between twelve and one o'clock on the night of the 15th June, a murderous attack was made on the butchers in the slaughter-house, situated outside the Lahori Gate of the city. Four men, who were sleeping in front of their houses inside the enclosure, were killed outright and three others were badly wounded. The local authorities were taken completely unawares[1]. The weather conditions being unfavourable, tracking was not possible. Moreover, the blue turban and the steel disc ingeniously left behind by the assailants led the investigating authorities astray.

The conduct of investigation was entrusted to the Superintendent Police, Jullundur, Mr. Christie, renowned for his great detective skill. He was first inclined to distrust appearances tending to cast suspicions on the inhabitants of the city itself and to suspect Kukas as the real perpetrators of the murders. But this first, and as subsequent events showed, correct impression was entirely effaced by the appearance on the scene soon after of an informer of the name of Hira, who professed to have been himself concerned in the commission of the crime. This man acted his part so well as completely to deceive Mr. Christie and all those with whom he was brought in contact, and from that time the inquiry was diligently pursued on information given by him, supported by another self-styled accomplice, named Ayya. At last when Jai Ram, a respectable broker of the city, admitted that he had instigated these men and the others named by them to commit the murders, all doubts were dispelled, and the evidence being considered sufficient to obtain convictions, twelve persons were, on the 25th July, committed by the Magistrate of the district, Mr. Birch, to take their trial before the Court of Sessions.

1. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A).

But while the case was still under trial at Amritsar, the butcher murder at Raikot took place. The murderers were apprehended, tried and condemned to death. They were all Kukas. One of the four convicts, named Gulab Singh[1], offered, if pardoned, to give up the names of all who had been concerned in the Amritsar murders. His offer was accepted and on the promise of pardon he gave up the names of his nine companions. With him Lieut. Colonels McAndrew and Baillie arrived at Amritsar on the 2nd August and enquiry into the truth of his statements commenced immediately. The next day, Fateh Singh, Hakim Singh and Lehna Singh were arrested. On the 5th August Beela Singh was brought in by the police and a day or two after Lehna Singh of Amritsar was apprehended. Four people, namely Jhanda Singh, Mehar Singh, Bhagwan Singh and Lachhman Singh could not be arrested. According to the version prevalent among the Kukas[2], there were no arrests by the police, for the Kukas voluntarily surrendered themselves to the authorities. They were told to do so by their Guru, so that the innocent committed to the Sessions Court at Amritsar might be saved. But this version, though very popular with the Kukas and worthy of consideration, needs to be supported by some more evidence to meet the approbation of our scholars.

The old case was now withdrawn and all the thirteen accused committed to the Sessions were released[3]. The entire evidence marshalled by the police was proved false, and the Chief Investigating Officer, Mr. Christie, was put to great shame by the ingenious manner and the tactics of torture by which he had reduced justice to

1. Home Judicial, Feb., 1872, Progs. 57-58.

W.G. Davies to L.H. Griffin, Offg. Secy., to the Government of Punjab.

2. Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit., pp. 134, 135, 140-44.

3. On 17th October 1872 Hira and Ayya were sued against by some of the innocent accused. Hira went into hiding. Ayya was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. Suit against Seth Jai Ram was not allowed by the Deputy Commissioner in the interest of the Government.

mockery. Significantly, the investigation of the Kuka case was not given to him, but was conducted by the Officiating Commissioner and Lieut. Col. Baillie. The police enquiry completed, the case was sent up to the District Magistrate on the 17th and was by him committed to the Sessions on the 19th August. It was tried by the Commissioner on the 28th, 29th and 30th of the same month. Four of the accused—Fateh Singh, Beela Singh, Hakim Singh and Lehna Singh—were sentenced to be hanged, and two others—Lal Singh and Lehna Singh —to be transported for life. The sentences of death, having been confirmed by the Chief Court, were carried out on the 15th September 1871[1]. The *'Satgur Bilas'* of Bhai Santokh Singh gives the following graphic account of the Kuka martyrs' heroism[2]:

"The Farangi said to the Singhs to be hanged : "Eat what you wish and meet whom you like." The Singhs replied : "Our food is the name of the Immortal God. We fear not death, because our ancestors have set noble examples of martyrdom. We will follow in their footsteps. Religion is our kith and kin. We wish to see none. We will be sacrifice unto religion, without any demur." The Farangi was silenced by this. The Singhs had their bath in the sacred tank of Amritsar and said their usual prayers. At this time, the attendant constable ordered them to march off. The Singhs marched off chanting hymns....The faces of the Singhs were blooming red. Fearless are those who do not fear death. Fearlessly, they mounted the seat of death. They offered 'Ardasa' (Sikh prayer) usual on the occasion of death and said, "With Thy Kindness we have mounted the throne." They earned a great name and high reputation. The gallant souls did not let the executioner come near them. They themselves put the nooses round their necks....

1. Home Judicial, Feb., 1872, Progs. 57-58.

Jhanda Singh of Thatha was apprehended on 11th August 1873. He was also tried and sentenced to death.

2. Quoted in Nahar Singh, op. cit., P. 311.

They did not flinch or falter. They met death with faces and not backs towards the gallows."

ATTACK ON RAIKOT BUTCHERS

Exactly one month after the Amritsar incident another band of Kukas fell upon the slaughter-house of Raikot in the district of Ludhiana. This slaughter-house was situated about 150 yards outside the city wall, not far from the gurdwara named after Guru Gobind Singh. Its proprietors were two notorious butchers, Buta and Ranjha, who had often given offence to the non-Muslim inhabitants of the city. Only a few days before the Kuka attack, Buta had been fined Rs. 10 on a complaint lodged against him by the Khatris of the place. The Sikhs of Raikot and elsewhere had a special grouse, because birds carried the bones and bits from the slaughter-house and perching on the temple walls would often throw them down into the gurdwara enclosure.

In the attack of the 15th July 1871 three people were killed and nine wounded, four of them seriously. However, the chief butchers, Ranjha and Buta, both escaped. Ranjha was sleeping on the roof of the house and made his escape by jumping off the rear wall. Buta was away at Ludhiana, busy with filing an appeal against the fine imposed on him.

The assailants escaped into the darkness of the night before anybody could come upon them. This being the second happening of its kind and following so close upon the first, the Government were naturally greatly upset. Immediately, orders were issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana that police guards be placed over all slaughter-houses in the district. A reward of one thousand rupees for the person giving the right clue and of pardon for the culprit turned approver were the other immediate announcements made by him. The Maharajas of Patiala and Nabha were written to for

assistance in the inquiry of the case. Both of them promised whole-hearted cooperation, the former declaring a reward as well of two hundred and fifty rupees for the giver of the correct clue.

After a few days' hectic investigation, the slayers of the butchers were tracked down with the aid of the trackers Bhupa and Bhanga. Khazan Singh Takiyawala gave up the names of Dal Singh of Chhiniwal, Mastan Singh, Nangal Singh and Gurmukh Singh of Pithoke and Rattan Singh of Naiwala. Out of these Dal Singh of Chhiniwal turned approver[1]. On 27th July 1871 Mr. J. W. Macnabb, Sessions Judge, Ambala, sentenced the three Kuka leaders of Pithoke and Gulab Singh of Churhchak to death. The sentences were confirmed by the Chief Court, Punjab, on 1st August 1871. It was after this that one of the people condemned to death, Gulab Singh, turned approver for the Amritsar case. The rest were hanged in public on 15th August outside the slaughter-house of Raikot.

After three months and eleven days, two other men were hanged outside the Ludhiana jail in connection with the same case. They were Gyani Rattan Singh of Mandi (Patiala State) and Rattan Singh of Naiwala. The former was a young Suba of 35 years, renowned for his ability, scholarship and missionary zeal, and, among many other things, performed the duties of an adalti (judge) among the Kukas of his area. For his vast learning he was popularly called by the name of Gyani or Gyana Singh[2]. The other man, 28 years old, was his Naib. Both of them were charged with abetment of the butcher murders at Raikot and sentenced to death by the Sessions Judge Mr. Macnabb on 26th October. Four days later the case was sent to the Chief Court for confirmation. One of the judges of this Court,

1. Home Judicial, 29th July 1871, Progs. 45-61 (A)—L. Cowan's Memorandum, dated 24th July 1871.

2. Five years earlier he had been sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for participating in a political movement directed against the unpatriotic Patiala Durbar. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

Mr. C. Boulnois, regarded the evidence of the witnesses as unsatisfactory and strongly recommended that the capital punishment awarded by the Sessions Judge should be changed into transportation for life. But the other judges, C. Campbell and C.R. Lindsay, did not see eye to eye with him. Both of them favoured the upholding of the lower court's judgment on the ground that the Kuka Movement being a political affair, the culprits deserved the sternest punishment. The executions were carried out on 26th November 1871. At the time of death, the Kuka leaders maintained the tradition of their fearlessness and the glory of their faith. They put on white dresses after bathing and sang the holy verses. A few minutes before the execution Suba Gyani Singh, according to the author of '*Satgur Bilas*', addressed the following brave words to the English officer on the spot[1]:

"Bilia (blue-eyed Farangi) ! Have your face and not back towards me. Passing ten months in the womb of some Jat lady, I will be again here to avenge myself. Hear, O'Bilia ! Your mind is polluted. It is not justice that you have done. Injustice is overcoming you. My end will not be the end of the movement against you.... I, too, will not be off for ever. Some mother will give birth to me. In the new form and getting young, I will once again take up the sword and have it out with you."

GOVERNMENT REACTIONS

When in the course of the investigation into the Raikot murders it became clear that Baba Ram Singh was the main force behind the butcher-killing movement[2], the Government officials were deeply concerned. On 8th August Lt. Col. Baillie wrote a memorandum holding Ram Singh responsible for all the murders and

1. Quoted in Nahar Singh, op. cit., pp. 346-347.

2. Clues to this were reported by Cowan and McAndrew on the basis of statements made before them by Kukas Gyani Singh, Harnam Singh and Gulab Singh. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

strongly recommended that he should be expelled from the country. The Government of the Punjab, after careful consideration, was of the view that the witnesses being all Kukas, it was not possible to depend upon them for the trial of Ram Singh, and that the stage of his expulsion from the country had not yet arrived. A letter to this effect was addressed[1] by it to the Government of India on 9th September 1871. In the following November two important memoranda were received by it from Mr. J. W. Macnabb, Officiating Commissioner, Ambala Division and Lt. Col. G. McAndrew, Deputy Inspector General, Police, Ambala Circle. Both of them demanded the immediate exilement of Ram Singh. Mr. Macnabb's memorandum, dated 4th November, began with stressing the political character of the Kuka Movement. It said[2]:

"Whatever may have been the intentions of the leaders of the sect at the beginning, its tendency is now distinctly political....Every thing points to this : Ram Singh has no pretensions to be saintly fakeer. He visits you attended by half a dozen horsemen. He is followed by scores of men on foot ; he comes into your room, surrounded by a court like a Prince. He and his people are dressed in exquisitely fine clothes."

"The Soobahs I have seen are young daring-looking men."

"I think the natural deduction from the above is that the movement has become (whatever it was in its beginning) a political and not a purely religious movement."

It proceeded to fix the whole responsibility on Baba Ram Singh :

"The whole of the evidence taken in the various murder trials proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the men, who wished orders as to the murders, all went direct to Ram Singh to receive their commands. Even the men, who say he told them to have nothing to do with

1. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-53.
2. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

them, still say they looked to him for orders."

"The political case against Ram Singh stands thus : He is the actual as well as the nominal leader of a sect which in its nature as a revival of the Khalsa is antagonistic to the British power."

The recommendation made was the immediate banishment of the Kuka leader from the country:

"In view then of what I believe to be the universal opinion that these acts of defiance have the express approval of the head of the sect that committed them, it seems necessary for the internal safety and tranquillity of the country that Ram Singh be deported to some place where he cannot be visited by his worshippers and his Soobahs confined to their homes and forbidden to hold melas."

"If this be not done," the memorandum warned, "our want of action will be put down to fear and Ram Singh will be a greater man than ever, and that the increase of his power and of the numbers of his followers cannot be unattended with great risk of serious disturbance, will not, I think, be questioned."

Mr. Macnabb wanted the immediate action against Ram Singh to be taken under Regulation III of 1818. He ruled out the method of punishment by trial, because it was a political and not legal matter, and regarded the alternative course of giving a stern warning to Ram Singh as 'unlikely to answer.'

Lt. Col. McAndrew in his memorandum of 20th November fully endorsed the views of Lt. Col. Baillie noticed earlier and made a strong recommendation saying[1] : "There should be no elaborate legal procedure and as a matter of general expediency and good government Ram Singh should be sent out of the country. He and his followers have now given most undoubted signs of a disposition to set all law and order at defiance."

The above memoranda were carefully considered by the Punjab Government. Its view on the trial of Ram

1. Ibid.

Singh was that it would not succeed, the reasons being the following[1]:

"The evidence in these cases was carefully considered by the Lieut. Governor, who did not think it advisable to authorise a criminal prosecution against Ram Singh for complicity in the murders, although it appeared certain that the disciples of Ram Singh would never have committed these murders with the object of stopping the slaughter of kine without the knowledge and approval of their spiritual head; and although in the trials at Amritsar and Raikot, direct evidence was given by Dal Singh, Gulab Singh, Kanh Singh and Ganda Singh implicating Ram Singh in the offence of abetting the murders by instigation, the Lieut. Governor was of opinion that the case against him was not sufficiently clear as to make his conviction in a Criminal Court certain and the failure of a prosecution ordered by the Government would have been regarded as a triumph by the initiated sect, the witnesses upon whose evidence the prosecution would have been compelled to rely, were men mostly of the Kuka sect, who could not be trusted to adhere to statements once made, when called upon to repeat in a case affecting the life or liberty of their Guru."

On the question of exilement of the Kuka leader, the Lieut. Governor was "of opinion that if sufficient judicial proof to warrant the prosecution of the Kuka leader in the ordinary courts was wanting, the case, as it stood, was not sufficiently strong to justify resort to the exceptional procedure reserved for critical emergencies, whilst there was still greater difficulty in directing a prosecution with the intention of issuing the warrant in the event of its being unsuccessful."

Nevertheless, on account of the new happenings, restrictions were reimposed upon the movements of Baba Ram Singh and on the fairs of the Kukas.

1. Ibid. Punjab Government to Government of India, dated 7th February 1872.

ATTACKS ON MALODH AND MALER KOTLA

Ever since the executions of the Kukas involved in the Amritsar and Raikot cases, in particular that of the renowned Suba Gyani Singh, there had been a lot of agitation in the minds of the whole community. Whatever the consequences, they were not to be deflected from the patriotic path once chosen. Their emotions were stirred deeply not only against the British Government, but also against the states of Nabha, Jind and Patiala, which had acted as the lackeys of the foreign government in hunting down their heroes of the Raikot butcher case. They decided now to come out in the open and abandon their former stratagy of attacks under cover of the night's darkness. A band of prospective martyrs was organised under the leadership of Hira Singh and Lehna Singh of Sakrowdi. Explaining the background of the attacks on Malodh and Maler Kotla, Mr. Macnabb writes[1]:

"Prophecies of the overthrow of the English and the restoration of the Khalsa rule have been circulated among the Kukas and there was a general rumour that this year, 1872, was to witness some great display of the Kuka Guru's power. Kukas sold their land and got rid of their property so as to be free to take part in the coming strife which was expected to take place in (Cheyt) April, but was precipitated by the action of certain Subahs who, on the plea of taking vengeance for the death of Gyani Singh...formed the plan of sending a body of 100 men to seize the capital of Maler Kotla State, where arms and horses would be found and distributed to the rest who should join."

Under the plan that was finally adopted, Maler Kotla was to be the first target. It was a "notoriously weak and misgoverned state[2]". The old ruler had died and the

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.
Macnabb to Griffin, Offg. Secy. to Punjab Government, dated Ist February 1872.
2. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

succession of the new ruler was disputed. The administration was in the hands of a Regency Council. It was, therefore, thought that there would not be much difficulty in getting money, arms and horses from there, which were so necessary to the success of their whole plan. Additionally, they were urged to the action by the supposed merit of an attack on the traditional enemies of the Sikhs as well as the butchers of the place, who had insulted Gurmukh Singh, a local man, by slaughtering an ox in his very presence. After this "an attack was to be made on Nabha, Jind, and Patiala, the railroad between Ludhiana and Ambala was to be broken up. Then they expected to be joined by Kukas from all sides[1]."

The Maghi fair at Bhaini Sahib on the 11th and 12th January 1872 was held in an extremely tense atmosphere. It was attended by about 500 to 1000 Kukas. The occasion being of Akhand Paths (ceaseless recitations from the Holy Granth) in memory of those who had recently laid down their lives in what they believed the noble cause of butcher-killing, there was a lot of agitation and animated talk among the people present. At the end of the fair, a band of about 100 mastanas (persons in a state of trance or nearly so) determined to make an attack on Maler Kotla. On learning about this from the headman and the chowkidar of the place, the Deputy Inspector Sarfraz Khan approached Baba Ram Singh to intercede with them. Later on, Sarfraz Khan reported to the authorities that the Baba had told him that the leaders of this band, Hira Singh and Lehna Singh, were not heeding his advice, being 'mastanas'. However, he "went up to these men with a turban round his neck and entreated of them not to create a disturbance[2]." But even this had no effect on them. The police officer then wanted to

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.
Macnabb to the Punjab Government, dated Ist February 1872. Also see Jind State Records, Sangin Munshikhana, File No. 741, year 1872.
2. Parliamentary Paper, No. 356, of 1872.

have the names of all these people. The Baba gave him as many names as he knew—thirteen in all. The author of '*Satgur Bilas*' writes that Guru Ram Singh gave the mastanas the following advice[1] :

"Don't be adamant. What your aim is, that is also my aim. Dharm (religion) is dear to us all. But what to do ? This is not the time. Don't be hasty. The time is not yet come. After a short time, things will be all right. Don't do any thing in hurry. All that you speak is at once reported by the police to the Englishmen. They tell us that our Singhs talk of disturbance. Have patience. Avoid hastiness. The Government harasses me. You can't do any thing in the matter. Wait for a year. The thing will be achieved here at Bhaini.... You repeatedly ask for my orders. I hesitate, for the plantation is yet too tender."

But Hira Singh, the leader of the band, replied :

"Guru Tegh Bahadur is commanding us. His figure is vivid before us. Now heads will be sacrificed ; otherwise we shall be false to our words. Guru Tegh Bahadur's order is : Your heads are wanted."

To this the reply of the Guru was :

"If it is the order of Guru Tegh Bahadur, I, too, cannot go against it. I can face the Farangi, but not the Akal Purkh (God)."

It will be seen from the above account that there was a complete agreement between the Baba and his followers on the basic issues. This may also be evident from the affectionate manner in which he brought them from their camp to his place and fed them from his own kitchen, even after they had disregarded his advice. His opposition was not to the cause, but to the selection of the time for the attack. Examined in this context, his sending on 13th January of a special messenger, Suba Lakha Singh, to Ludhiana to inform the authorities about the intention of these people was not "mere peshbandee or a ruse to save himself in the event

1. P. 406.

of a reverse[1]," but an honest attempt to prevent the Kuka attack from taking place at the time. He expected the authorities to take some measures beforehand to prevent the attack. But as we shall see later, the authorities acted to the contrary and instead of checking the attack, allowed it to take place, so that they might use it as a pretext for the destruction of the Kuka power.

The Kuka band, including two ladies, headed by Hira Singh and Lehna Singh of Sakrowdi set off from Bhaini Sahib on their fateful journey on 13th January. They halted for the night and for the greater part of the following day at a village called Rubboo. It was here that they decided to fall upon the Malodh fort of Badan Singh. They had no arms excepting a few swords and gandasas (choppers) and realized that the success of their attack on Maler Kotla would be greatly facilitated, if they could help themselves to some of the Malodh Sardar's arms and horses. "They arrived at the gate of Malodh just at dusk. They took possession of the gate and proceeding through the bazar, where they dropped sentries at cross streets so as to secure their retreat, made straight for S. Mit Singh's (Badan Singh's father) house[2]." In the fighting that ensued, both sides suffered some losses. On the Kuka side the losses were two killed and four wounded, while on the other side they were two killed and two wounded. From here the Kukas were able to get three swords, one double-barrelled gun, two horses and one mare. Of course, the gains were not proportionate to the losses suffered. Even so, every thing that could help in the coming attack on Kotla, mattered, and hence no sacrifice could be too high for it.

The long-contemplated attack on Maler Kotla was made on the morning of 15th January at about 7

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132—Appendix V.
2. Ibid.

o'clock. The authorities there had already got information about the designs of the band. Mr. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, had warned, through their agents, the rulers of Maler Kotla, Patiala and Jind that the Kukas were out for some mischief in their areas. He could have done something more, but discreetly held back. The Maler Kotla people had been, therefore, put in a state of preparedness before the attack actually came to pass. They expected the attack during the night of the 14th January and took all precautionary measures such as placing patrols round the city and strengthening the guards at the gates. But nothing occurring in the night, they were put slightly off guard at 7 a.m. when the Kukas, about 125 in number, suddenly scaled a damaged wall and entered the palace of the ruler. Their object of going into the palace was to get hold of arms, money and horses.[1] But for the mishap of unnecessary delay caused by an almirah of office files being the first to be broken open, the assailants would have had much success in acquiring the things they wanted. The delay enabled the state police and soldiers to reach the spot before they could lay their hands upon more than a few swords and horses. After this occurred some severe fighting between the two parties, in which several casualties were suffered by both the sides. Despairing of being able to get any more arms, money or horses, the Kukas decided to leave Kotla. They were, however, chased by the state troops. In the course of the chase a few bloody actions were fought, in which they invariably had the upper hand. By 11 or so, the Kukas succeeded in reaching the village Rur. The casualties suffered on this occasion totalled eight killed, two dangerously wounded, two seriously wounded and nine slightly wounded on the side of the Kotla troops and seven killed, one dangerously wounded, one seriously wounnded and thirty slightly wounded on the side of the

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132-Memorandum on the happenings of Malodh and Maler Kotla.

Kukas. Obviously, the assailants had acquitted themselves most valiantly. The enemy had an adequate supply of first class guns and swords. As compared with him, they had practically no guns and did the whole fighting with the very limited supply of swords and gandasas that they had in their possession.

While the Kukas were near the Rur village looking after their wounded after the morning's heavy fight and taking stock of the situation, they were suddenly overpowered[1] by Niaz Ali, the Naib Nazim of Amargarh (Patiala State), who appeared on the scene at about one in the afternoon. They were made to surrender their arms and were taken from Rur to Sherpur, from where the Naib Nazim had come. The Kukas at that time were sixty eight in number. Niaz Ali had only a small force with him, but he was able to achieve his object with the help of the people of Rur.

Although the insurgents had been overpowered and apprehended, there was still a possibility of a general rising of the Kuka sect. Therefore, immediately after the news of the attack was received, telegrams were sent to the Government for rushing troops at once to Ludhiana and Khanna. Accordingly, the First Gurkha Battalion, a wing of 72 Regiment and a mule battery were despatched to Khanna, whereas three companies of 54 Foot, 12th Bengal Cavalry and a half-battery of Royal Artillery were sent to Ludhiana. As if this were not enough, immediate appeals were sent for military assistance to the rulers of Patiala, Nabha and Jind.

Before we conclude, it may be worth while to say a few words as to how the Kuka outbreak was interpreted by the British authorities. Let us start from the bottom.

Mr. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, and Mr.

1. Niaz Ali later on boasted that he had captured the Kukas with the aid only of a few policemen. But this is not correct. According to the Jind Agent's report of the 20th January 1872, it was the people of Rur who got the Kukas apprehended. Vide Jind State Records, Sangin Munshikhana, File No. 741, year 1872.

Forsyth, Commissioner, Ambala Division, were directly and intimately connected with the suppression of the outbreak. Cowan was firmly of the opinion that the Maler Kotla attack was the beginning of the Kuka rebellion. Writing from Maler Kotla to Forsyth on 17th January 1872, he said[1] : "A rebellion, which might have attained large dimensions, was nipped in the bud." Four days later (and this was several days before he even knew that he was going to be suspended) he informed the same gentleman[2] : "The later information received confirms the belief that a serious outbreak was intended and that matters were precipitated by the hasty action of this fanatical party before the arrangements of the leaders were fully matured. For several days after the attack, parties of Kookas arrived from all parts and on hearing of the fate of their brethren instantly dispersed and disappeared. Had the large numbers of rebels captured been detained in custody to await a formal trial, there is not the slightest doubt that similar atrocities would have been committed in other parts and that a state of anarchy would have followed."

As regards Forsyth's view, it may be judged from the following : (i) "I beg to bring to notice the energetic exertions of Mr. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner, whose prompt action has put a stop to what threatened to be a serious outbreak[3];" (ii) "I regret exceedingly this hasty action on Mr. Cowan's part. His reason for such is that he felt it necessary to stamp out the incipient rebellion by a swift and terrible punishment. That his prompt and vigorous action had this effect is, I think, undoubted....While lamenting the hasty and irregular action of Mr. Cowan, I am bound to express my conviction that the very prompt and terrible measures taken by him crushed in its birth a very serious outbreak[4]."

1. Parliamentary Paper of 1872, No. 356, P. 16.
2. Ibid, P. 23.
3. Ibid, P. 20. Forsyth to Punjab Government, dated 20th January 1872.
4. Ibid, P. 22. Forsyth to Punjab Government, dated 22nd January 1872.

What was the reaction of the Punjab Government to the views mentioned above ? A few examples may be given by way of illustration. Writing to the Government of India on 26th January 1872, the Lieut. Governor made a strong plea that the actions of Cowan and Forsyth must be supported, because they were "taken in good faith", and further because "the authorities on the spot could alone correctly judge of the tendency of such (Kukas') demonstrations[1]." Four days earlier, the secretary to the Punjab Government had congratulated[2] Forsyth on his performance. A little later the Lieut. Governor visited Ludhiana and after making careful personal enquiries wrote out a minute on 26th February for the Government of India. In a manner both forceful and lucid he expressed his view as : "I have seen no reason to doubt the correctness of Mr. Cowan's belief that a serious outbreak was intended and have no hesitation in saying that there are substantial grounds to apprehend a rebellion on the part of the Kukas[3]."

Now about the attitude of the Government of India. On the basic issue of the political character of the Kuka rising, there was hardly any difference of opinion between the Government of India and the local authorities or if at all, it was only a difference of degree of emphasis, which was the natural result of the Supreme Government being so far removed from the actual scene of action. For instance, mark the following words which occur in its letter of 30th April 1872[4] : "...the punishment now inflicted on a British Officer (Cowan), who has broken the law, is not in any way connected with indifference or indulgence to the crimes of those whom he punished unlawfully. The offence was deserving of exemplary punishment, though it should have been inflicted in a

1. Ibid, P. 21.

2. Home Judicial (A) July 1872, Progs. 208-11. Forsyth to Dampler, Offg. Secretary to Government of India, dated 6th July 1872.

3. Home Judicial (A) June 1872, Progs. 107-111.

4. Parliamentary Paper of 1872, No. 356, P. 58.

proper manner with greater moderation and with more discrimination between the degrees of guilt of persons concerned." The concluding paragraph of the letter clarifies the point further: "The Lieut. Governor, from the first, embraced and expressed the opinion that the conduct of Mr. Cowan was unjustifiable in regard to the precipitation, illegality and indiscriminate rigour of his proceedings. A consideration of the exciting circumstances under which Mr. Cowan acted, of the political danger which he apprehended, of the necessity of supporting officers of Government in acts even of excessive severity when done in good faith and for the public interest, induced the Lieut. Governor to withhold an expression of blame which would have been otherwise in accordance with his sentiments, and of which the Governor General in Council would have approved. His Excellency is, however, happy to be able to recognize that there is no essential difference between the views entertained by the Governor General in Council and those of the high officer entrusted with the administration and security of a province so important as the Punjab."

From the above it will appear that the only difference between the Supreme Government and the local authorities was with regard to the executions carried out by Cowan and Forsyth. Whereas the local authorities justified them on the basis of gravity of the situation, the Supreme Government took the view that howsoever grave the situation might be, "nothing short of immediate necessity could justify such a measure as the summary execution[1]" of so many people. They thought, and they were able to show from the writings of Cowan himself, that it was possible, even in those difficult circumstances, to avoid summary executions by putting the prisoners on trial. The trial would have meant a delay of only a day or so, which was not a difficult matter. Had the trial (a fair trial, and not a hotch-potch business like the one held by Forsyth on 18th January) been

1. Ibid, P. 25.

conducted, the excessive number of executions (the main objection of the Government of India) could have been greatly reduced.

Even this view of the Governor General in Council in regard to the executions was questioned by Forsyth in his representation dated Ist July 1872 and his supplementary statement dated 27th July 1872[1]. His main argument was that the executions carried out by him and Cowan were fully justified and that the Government of India could not reasonably lose sight of the immediate danger from the Kukas and the emergent necessity for prompt and severe punishment. He was at great pains to describe the dangerous character of the Kuka Movement and the grave crisis created by the Kuka attacks on Malodh and Maler Kotla. In reply, the Government of India again drew a distinction between political expediency and immediate necessity. They did not dispute the seditious character of the rising, nor did they answer the arguments marshalled by Forsyth. They simply said that they were not willing to reopen the case. Why they did not want to do so, they did not explain, but it was probably due to the serious complications involved in the issue. Cowan's case was bound up with Forsyth's. Any reconsideration of his case would have compromised the position of the Government in the eyes of the public, both Indian and British. The attitude of the Government of India may be gauged from its letter dated 10th October 1872, which was sent to the Secretary of State for India along with Forsyth's representation and other relevant papers. "We do not consider ourselves called upon," they remarked[2], "to discuss again the propriety of the action of Mr. Cowan and of Mr. Forsyth in respect to the executions of the Kooka prisoners. The question has been decided by the Government of India and the decision has been confirmed by Her Majesty's Govern-

1. Home Judicial (A) July 1872, Progs., 212-220; Home Judicial (A) October 1872, Progs., 88-95.
2. Home Judicial (A) October 1872, Progs., 88-95.

ment. It is therefore not necessary for us to enter into the general arguments which Mr. Forsyth has put forward in defence of the executions. We have only to observe that the importance of the Kuka Movement and the gravity of the circumstances connected with the outbreak were fully placed before the Government of India by the Lieut. Governor of the Punjab."

While concluding the above letter the Governor General in Council, however, said that although they would not "relieve him from the censure of the Government," they would like to recommend that "his previous services should not be overlooked, if an opportunity should arise for his future employment to the advantage of the public service." In reply the Secretary of State for India expressed his "entire concurrence in all the views stated by His Excellency in Council[1]", including the recommendation regarding Forsyth. This was, indeed, tantamount to indirectly nullifying the action against Forsyth and saying to him that the censure against him was merely formal and that his future career would not be affected by it. Is it not, one may ask, a round-about way of falling in line entirely with the views of the local authorities?

The conclusion, which inescapably follows from the foregoing account, is that the view that the Kuka rising was a political rebellion was almost universally recognised. Doubts are sometimes entertained as to whether the attack on Maler Kotla was the beginning of that rebellion. Men on the spot assert (and their opinion must be given the due weight) that it was so. A serious limitation of this view is that the attack was not followed up by the Kukas. To this the answer is given that some Kuka groups were noticed approaching Maler Kotla from different directions during those days, but they dared not come nearer and dispersed hearing of the fate of their brethren who had been blown off. It is said that had

1. Home Judicial (A) January 1873, Progs., 61. Secretary of State to Government of India, dated 21st November 1872.

the incipient rebellion not been nipped in the bud, it would have assumed large proportions. Another reason why the rebellion did not develop was that it was precipitated by Hira Singh and Lehna Singh before the arrangements for it were complete. This argument not only is advanced by the local authorities, but is also supported by the Kuka tradition and literature, as explained earlier in this chapter. However, even if it is admitted that it was precipitated prematurely, it was still undoubtedly a rebellion which, in the event of success of the first attack or in the absence of the savage massacre of Maler Kotla, might have spread. But the ultimate result would not have been different from what it was, because the British were yet far too powerful to be shaken.

CHAPTER VI

RETRIBUTION

THE Kuka outbreak of 1872 was visited by a terrific punishment, in ferocity equalled by very few events of our history. The memories of the Indian Revolt of 1857 being still fresh, the authorities were scared and did not want to miss the opportunity to teach another lesson to those who were not reconciled to foreign domination and were ever on the look out for a suitable time when they could strike a blow at it. A foreign government is always based on force and so was the British. Even though they tried hard to win over the people by dangling before them temptations of titles, rewards and promotions, they had no great success in winning what may be called the real consent of the ruled. They tried their hand, then, at the policy of 'divide et impera'. This, of course, proved most useful to them. Even so, they were well aware of the fact that unless they were able to penalise acts of opposition or sedition in the severest possible manner, they could have no hope of survival for long in the midst of a population basically hostile. A striking demonstration of the rulers' retaliation was given after the rebellion of 1857. The Kuka outbreak occuring so soon after that showed that the lesson had not been fully driven home. Hence the urgency of another awe-inspiring demonstration of the imperial might.

In the retribution against the Kuka insurgents, Mr. L. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana and Mr. T.D. Forsyth, the Commissioner of Ambala, were the principal actors. On hearing of the Kuka attack on Malodh, Cowan rushed to the spot on the 15th.

Having made a hurried investigation there, he telegraphically asked for the Punjab Government's permission for immediate execution of four out of the seven Kuka prisoners, about whose guilt he said there was no doubt.[1] On the evening of the following day he went to Maler Kotla. On the way he received information about the apprehension of a group of Kukas, who had attacked Kotla, and gave verbal instructions for them to be brought forthwith to the scene of their late action. Reaching Kotla, he immediately engaged himself in making arrangements for guns and troops for the enactment of the next day's bloody drama, regarding which he seems to have already made up his mind finally and irrevocably. From Kotla at 7.30 P.M. on the 16th, the day of his arrival there, he sent a letter[2] to the Commissioner Forsyth, who had by then reached Ludhiana, in which he gave a hint as to the course of action he was going to follow. He wrote that "their offence is not an ordinary one. They have not committed mere murder and dacoity; they are open rebels, offering contumacious resistance to constituted authority and to prevent the spreading of the disease, it is absolutely necessary that repressive measures should be prompt and stern. I am sensible of the great responsibility I incur; but I am satisfied that I act for the best, and that this incipient insurrection must be stamped out at once."

Next day he addressed another letter to the Commissioner repeating his determination. He wrote[3] :

"I am in hourly expectation of the arrival of the prisoners from Rurr. I propose to execute all who were engaged in the attack on Malodh and Kotla. I am sensible of the great responsibility I incur in exercising an authority which is not vested in me, but the case is an exceptional one."

1. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, P. 51.
2. Ibid, P. 11.
3. Ibid, P. 15.

The Commissioner immediately wrote back advising him against any hasty action. This letter was delivered to Cowan before or about noon (17th January) as he was riding through the town of Kotla. It was to the effect that "he had heard of the capture of the rebels, that in the present state of the country it would be better that they should be detained in the Patiala fort of Sherpur till he could send out a sufficiently strong guard to take charge of them[1]." Cowan remarked later on that "this note did not contain any instructions to have them brought to trial," and that he "put the note in my (his) pocket and thought no more about it. It contained only a suggestion which could not be acted on, for the captured Kukas were then close to Kotla on their way in[2]." But this was contradicted by Forsyth by saying : "On reaching Ludhiana on the evening of the 16th, I received a letter from Mr. Cowan expressing his desire to execute his prisoners at once. I wrote requesting him to leave all men caught by Patiala authorities in their charge till I could send out a guard to bring them to Ludhiana for trial[3]."

Determined as he was, Cowan, inspite of his knowledge that he had no legal authority in the matter and of his superior official's injunction against any hasty action, ordered that the 68 Kuka prisoners be taken to the Kotla parade grounds and fifty of them be blown off at once from the mouths of cannon in the presence of the Patiala, Nabha and Maler Kotla troops summoned for the occasion. Regarding the remainder his intention was to execute them (exclusive of two ladies Ind Kaur and Khem Kaur who were handed over to the custody of the commandant of the Patiala contingent to be released later on) at Malodh the following day. While he was engaged on his bloody and barbaric task, he received two letters from the Commissioner, one of which was

1. Parliamentary Paper. 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, Pp. 53,56.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

a d.o. letter which reads as follows[1] :

"My dear Cowan,

You have done admirably, but for Heaven's sake don't let the whole thing fall short of perfect success by any hasty act. By dealing with the men caught as culprits in the Kotla territory they can be hanged legally without the delay of sending the case to the Chief Court, by attending to the form usual in all such cases, i.e., sending up the proceedings to me, and to save time and trouble, I am going out to Kotla as soon as I have disposed of Ram Singh. But if you hang these men, i.e., the men caught at Malodh, you will fall short of perfect success ; a delay of twelve hours cannot produce harm, whereas illegal action may cause trouble. I only wait for Ram Singh to come in tomorrow morning, and I shall then be out at once."

The official letter of Forsyth explained the legal position with regard to the crimes committed by the Kukas. It said[2] : "The body of Kookas now apprehended in Patiala territory have committed two separate offences, one offence affecting British jurisdiction, the other offence affecting the semi-independent jurisdiction of Malerkotla. As regards offences committed in Malerkotla, the authorities there have full power to try and sentence criminals, sending the case up to the Commissioner for sanction when the sentence is capital punishment."

In its fourth paragraph the letter urged upon the Deputy Commissioner as thus : "I request that you will prepare at once the case against such as appear to you to be deserving of capital punishment and I shall then give immediate orders. But with reference to your expressed desire for promptitude the case is not sufficiently urgent to justify the abandonment of the very simple form of procedure we have at hand. I propose proceeding to Malerkotla very shortly."

1. Ibid. Also Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.
2. Ibid, P. 11.

And yet no effect was produced on Cowan who went ahead with the execution work, as if nothing important had transpired, and did not deem it necessary to stop it till he had forty nine prisoners blown off and one hacked to pieces by the sword for the offence of his having made a physical assault on him.

On returning from the executions he addressed a letter to the Commissioner explaining the reasons why he had to depart from his orders. He wrote[1] : "This was a most painful duty and it was made inexpressibly painful to me by receipt of your letter of today's date, received as the last batch was being lashed to the guns, desiring me to make an inquiry and forward the proceedings to you for punishment. In carrying out execution of my own sentence, I acted on the honest and sincere conviction that I was acting in the best interests of Government. A rebellion, that might have attained large dimensions, was nipped in the bud and a terrible and prompt punishment was in my opinion absolutely necessary to prevent the recurrence of similar rising."

Absolutely unrepentent for the barbarities he had committed, he concluded the above letter with an earnest appeal for permission to carry out the remaining sixteen executions without any delay : "I most sincerely trust that you will, after this explanation, approve of what I have done. I am placed in a most difficult position here, with reference to the 16 rebels who have remained unpunished. It was, as I have stated above, my intention to have sent them for execution to Malodh tomorrow, and I earnestly beg that you will sanction my carrying out sentence at once."

Forsyth gave no sanction for further executions, but did accord his approval for the earlier ones in an unofficial written message to Cowan, which was sent on the 18th a little before he left for Kotla. He wrote[2] : "A line to

1. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, P. 16.
2. Home Judicial (A) July 1872, Progs. 208-11.

say, I fully confirm and approve all you have done. You have acted with energy and promptitude. I am coming out." Soon after, he arrived at Maler Kotla accompanied by Col. Gough and some troops. Mr. Cowan with the assistance of the Nazim and the Tehsildar of Maler Kotla[1] had already taken statements of the surviving prisoners and prepared the case against them, and on the Commissioner's arrival he lost no time in committing the accused to him as the Viceroy's Agent for the state of Maler Kotla. After affirming that he had absolutely no doubt as to their guilt, he recommended : "They have committed an act of open rebellion and deserve the severest penalty of law[2]." What was meant by "the severest penalty of law" was capital punishment, for otherwise under the law the case could not have been referred to the Commissioner. The Commissioner did not take much time over the file, but forthwith gave his decision with the remarks: "I concur with the Committing Officer and confirm the sentence of death against all to be carried into immediate execution[3]." Soon after this, all the sixteen prisoners were taken to the parade grounds and blown off exactly like their brothers on the previous day. It may also be mentioned that he not only did not disown Cowan's executions of the 17th, but actually applauded his promptitude in suppressing "the incipient rebellion" in his official communication to the Punjab Government[4]."

The above trial held under the orders of the Commissioner Forsyth raises some serious doubts as to the correctness of the procedure adopted. Was the tribunal composed of Cowan and two Maler Kotla officials properly constituted ? How did Cowan find a seat on it ? Was he a co-opted member ? How could he (no subject of the state of Maler Kotla) act as the committing officer ?

1. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, P. 18.
2. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.
3. Ibid.
4. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, P. 18.

Was it not the right of the state itself ? Then again, were the Kotla officials on the tribunal given the discretion that was theirs by law ? These and many other questions may be asked in regard to the subject. Some of them to be answered properly require an enquiry into the law that governed the jurisdiction of the Maler Kotla courts. Even so, on the basis of what we know, it should be possible to say that it was not only a mock trial but also a wholly illegal affair (in spirit, if not in letter). If that was the kind of trial the Commissioner had been persistently urging from Ludhiana upon Cowan, then one may say that in the ultimate analysis there was not much to choose between Forsyth and Cowan. Both of them were more or less guilty of arbitrariness in a matter of the utmost gravity.

After the prisoners had been blown off, a Durbar was held in the evening, at which the Commissioner gave away, on behalf of the Maler Kotla State, cash prizes to the value of Rs. 1800/- to eight people who had rendered valuable assistance in the apprehension of the insurgents. Niaz Ali, Naib Nazim, Amargarh, was awarded the highest prize of Rs. 1000/-. At the same time, letters of thanks under the signatures of the Commissioner were sent to the Maharajas of Patiala, Nabha and Jind on behalf of Maler Kotla.

The following day the Commissioner reached Malodh. Accompanying him were Cowan, Perkins (Superintendent, Police, Ludhiana) and Gough. At Malodh he heard the cases of four Kukas—Bhagwan Singh, Gian Singh, Thaman Singh and Mehar Singh—in the capacity of Sessions Judge. They were the very people for whose instantaneous execution Cowan had telegraphically begged the Punjab Government's permission three days earlier. Forsyth in his judgment declared all of them guilty of a crime punishable under the law with death. However, on the following two grounds[1] the death punishment

1. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356, P. 19. Also Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

was commuted into transportation for life :

1. A sufficient example had been made and there was room now for a display of clemency.
2. All the four prisoners were most severely wounded and two had broken limbs.

The judgment was then, as per law, submitted to the Chief Court for confirmation which was accorded shortly afterwards.

Before Forsyth left Malodh on the 20th, he received an urgent telegram from the Punjab Government, in which he was warned against any more executions. The Punjab Government's warning was the result of the Viceroy Mayo's telegram to it of the 19th January. The telegram[1] was : "Stop summary execution of Kookas without your express orders."

The actions of Cowan and Forsyth in blowing off sixty five people and hacking to pieces one in the short space of two days, though utterly illegal, were approved[2] by the Punjab Government. Cowan's action was no doubt not liked, but even that was repeatedly defended in its communications to the Central Government of the 7th, 22nd and 26th February, as one done in good faith and for the best interests of the Government. Regarding the mode of punishment, the plea made by it subsequently was : "Blowing from a gun is an impressive and merciful manner of execution well calculated to strike terror into the bystanders[3]." This was, however, subjected to a treatment of ridicule and sarcasm at the higher levels of authority. For instance, John Strachey, who was a member of the Viceroy's Council, characterised it as "repugnant to humanity and a punishment unfit to be inflicted by civilized men," adding that "to apply such a term as

1. Home Judicial, 20th January 1872, Progs. 55—71.
2. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356, P. 21—Letter to Govt. of India, dated 26th January 1872.
3. Home Judicial (A) July 1872, Progs. 208—211. Griffin to Dampler, dated Simla 29th June 1872.

merciful to such a punishment is a strange misuse of language[1]."

Unlike the Punjab Government, the Government of India from the very outset strongly disapproved of the summary method employed by Cowan and Forsyth. A reference has already been made to its telegram of the 19th January ordering the stoppage of illegal executions. Five days later, definite instructions were issued to the Lieut. Governor, Punjab, that Cowan be suspended[2] from service immediately and asked to tender explanation for his misconduct. The Lieut. Governor's intercession on the 29th January on Cowan's behalf was rejected outright. The following three months of February, March and April were taken up by a close scrutiny of the case. On 1st May the decision of the Government was conveyed to the Local Government both telegraphically and by post. The telegram[3] was to the effect : "Orders in Kuka case sent by post today. The Governor General in Council compelled to condemn conduct both of Mr. Cowan and of Mr. Forsyth. Former will be removed from the service. Mr. Forsyth transferred to Commissionership in Oudh. Secretary of State will be asked to sanction pension for Mr. Cowan."

The letter dated 30th April explained the decision of the Government of India in detail. Regarding Cowan it said[4]: "His Excellency is under the painful necessity of affirming that the course followed by him was illegal, that it was not palliated by any public necessity, that it was characterised by incidents which gave it a complexion of barbarity. That course was commenced in opposition to the spirit of instructions received from superior authority, and in the absence of sanction, invoked but not awaited ; it was prosecuted to completion

1. Ibid. Opinions of the Members of the Govt. of India *reg.* the mode of execution.
2. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356, P. 17.
3. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356.
4. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112—132 ; Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356, Pp. 55—58.

in contravention of positive orders." The charges against Forsyth were explained thus: "He has in no small degree identified himself with the errors committed by Mr. Cowan.... and he acted eventually in a manner inconsistent with the recognised policy of the Government of India....His proceedings showed a want of that merciful discrimination which ought in all such cases to be characteristic of the British administration of justice." These were serious charges. Therefore, although he was not dismissed as Cowan was, it was decided that he would be transferred and given a position "in which he will not have to superintend the judicial proceedings of any native state". Further, there was "an expression of the opinion of the Government of India that he ought not in future to be placed in a position in which he would be called upon to exercise similar control and superintendence."

A question may here be asked : Why was the Government of India so unrelenting in its condemnation of the two officials ? The officials had said that they had acted in the best interests of the Government by putting down promptly an incipient rebellion. Their errors were errors of judgment and not of motivation. The Government of the Punjab, as noticed earlier, had strongly pleaded on their behalf. The Maharaja of Patiala had addressed a long letter to the Local Government in defence of Forsyth's prompt action expressing the firm opinion : "Had Kookas even a meagre success in their attacks at Maler Kotla and Malodh, the whole sect would have sprung like fiends from all sides, who were eagerly watching the results of these pantomime attacks[1]". But nothing that was said or done in support of the disgraced officials could make the Government of India relent. Why ? The basic reason, as explained by it, was its inability to tolerate any infringement of an established principle of its administrative policy. This was most

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 107—111.

clearly stated by it in a letter to the Punjab Government, dated 30th April 1872[1]. "His Excellency in Council desires to impress, in the most emphatic manner, on all civil and military officers, whom it may concern," it was pointed out, "the broad principle that the law of the land administered by the established courts is the instrument to which it trusts, for the purpose of suppressing crime, maintaining peace, deterring ill-disposed persons from following the example of malefactors, and that it is a grave act of insubordination and presumption for any individual officer to take upon himself to decide upon the spur of the moment that the law is not strong enough to protect society or that the punishments which can be inflicted in its ordinary course are not sufficiently severe to deter from crime. To do so is to usurp the highest prerogative of the Government."

It was added that it was possible that "cases may arise in which Government may consider it necessary to punish particular offences with exceptional severity or to arm particular officers with special powers of summary trial and execution," but it was asserted that "till this is done, the duty of all civil and military officers is to treat criminals, when captured, in the regular course of law, that is to say, to hand them over for trial to the proper tribunals." Under the administrative policy of the Government, "the one thing, which cannot be permitted to any civil or military officer in any case whatever, is the regular assumption of the office of the judge and of the legislator. No such officer has right to punish his prisoners, still less has he any right to punish them according to a law made by himself."

The attitude of the British Government on the question of blowing off the Kuka prisoners from guns, as we have seen above, deserves credit so far as it goes, but it must not be stretched too far or exaggerated. Its proper assessment can be had only if it is examined in

1. **Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, P. 55.**

the context of the Government's over-all attitude towards the Kuka rising. The punishment of Cowan and Forsyth implied no sympathy for those who had fallen at their hands. No compensation whatever was paid to any of the bereaved families ; nay, not even a word of sympathy was conveyed to them. On the contrary, they were harassed, intimidated and in certain cases impoverished by the attachment of their property. Nor was there in the official verdict any implication that regular trial under the law was a sacred principle not to be violated, for the Government itself violated it by detaining Baba Ram Singh and his ten Subas for life under Regulation III of 1818.

The verdict also did not signify any denial of the political character of the Kuka rising or of the grave situation created by the various Kuka attacks. This is quite evident from the wholesale manner (discussed later in this chapter) in which the civil liberties of the Kukas, including even the ordinary religious activities, were heavily curbed. This may also be clear from what a senior member of the Supreme Government wrote in his observations on the Macnabb Report on the Subas. He was speaking not only for himself but also for the Government, when he said : "Nevertheless, there can be no doubt, I think, from these papers that his (Ram Singh's) ultimate object, and that of his whole sect, was the subversion of all existing government and the establishment of his own political and religious supremacy and that the language and conduct of the entire body of leaders has been as seditious as it could well be[1]". It is significant to remember that this was a universally held view contested by no contemporary Englishman.

We have seen above what the verdict did not imply. We should also see what it did imply. On close examination, it will be seen to be more of an expression of indignation against the officials unlawfully assuming the

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273—284.

prerogative, which belonged to the Government and not to them, than any thing else. Their duty was to make use of the ordinary law of the land. It was for the Government to decide whether there should be, on grounds of high policy, any departure from it. The offence of the officials was all the more serious, because in this case there could be no difficulty about legally establishing the guilt of the Kukas involved. It was believed that had the legal course been adopted, the elements of barbarity, severity and indiscrimination in the punishment inflicted could easily have been avoided, and the Government of India saved from much of the criticism made in the British Parliament,[1] or the Press[2]. However, even as the matter stood, "there was no offence against the rules of morality or rectitude[3]" involved in the actions of Cowan and Forsyth.

The view of the Lieut. Governor of the Punjab was even more forthright on this aspect. He forcefully impressed upon the Supreme Government that the proceedings of Cowan, "however in his opinion hasty and irregular, were taken in good faith as necessary to the public safety and however indiscriminate, impolitic and unduly severe, involved, nevertheless, no absolute injustice[4]."

II

Baba Ram Singh and his Subas were not directly connected with the events of Malodh and Maler Kotla. Yet, they were arrested and sent out of the Punjab on the ground that they could not be disconnected with the Kuka outbreak. At the time of the Malodh and Maler Kotla happenings, the Lieut. Governor of the Punjab

1. Dr. M.M. Ahluwalia, op. cit., P. 95.
2. For instance, the Friend of India said in a leading article of 15th August 1872 : "The Kuka massacre was a massacre pure and simple."
3. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356, P. 59—Government of India to Secy. of State for India, 3rd May 1872.
4. Ibid, P. 28. Punjab Govt. to Govt. of India, 7th Feb., 1872.

was at Delhi. No sooner did he hear of the Kuka attacks than he sent a telegram[1] on the 16th (11.50 A.M.) to the Governor General at Calcutta informing him about the new situation and his own authorisation of the arrest of Ram Singh and his prominent Subas. The most important portion of it reads as follows :

> "Following on antecedents these outrages show incorrigible conspiracy in leaders of sect. Country not safe whilst leaders at large. I have therefore authorised Forsyth to effect capture of Ram Singh and principal Soobas. Report by post."

The reply telegram[2] of the Central Government reached the Lieut. Governor on the same day in the evening. It reads :

> "Your action entirely approved. We shall be anxious to hear further particulars."

The man commissioned by the Lieut. Governor to effect the arrests of Baba Ram Singh and his Subas was Mr. T.D. Forsyth, the Commissioner of Ambala Division. The first thing that he did on reaching Ludhiana on the evening of the 16th January was to order the police officer Lieut. Col. Baillie to achieve the object with speed. Accompanied by a police party, Baba Ram Singh with his two Subas, Sahib Singh and Jawahar Singh and two personal attendants reached Ludhiana on the 17-18th night at about 1 A.M. Forsyth had already made arrangements for their transportation and after making a few searching inquiries, which the Baba answered without any hesitation, sent off the whole party to Allahabad by the 4 o'clock morning train. Shortly after this he addressed a letter[3] to the Government, Punjab, in which he explained his action as being "absolutely necessary for the preservation of peace in this district, if not for the peace of the whole

1. Home Judicial, 20 January 1872, Progs. 55—71.
2. Ibid.
3. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, P. 12.

province." "The complicity of Ram Singh in the outrages committed by his followers at Malodh and in the State of Malerkotla," he wrote, "has not yet been thoroughly enquired into, and it is a fact that he reported to the police the intention of Lehna Singh and Hira Singh, the chief actors in the present case to commit outrages. But by his own admission his followers make use of his name and take advantage of his presence among his fellows to commit murders and create disturbances."

Forsyth put great stress on the answers to his questions given by Baba Ram Singh. He said : "He admits ...that some time before the Amritsar murder, two men Jhanda Singh and Mehar Singh asked leave to kill the butchers; others joined in the request, but he strenuously forbade them ; nevertheless they perpetrated the crime. He admits that though he had a strong suspicion that these men were the culprits, he did not give any information to the Government. Some time afterwards, he says, Dal Singh, Mangal Singh, Dewan Singh and two others came and asked his leave to commit the Raikot murder, but he forbade them, and they did the deed without his knowledge. But he admits that he never gave any clue to the Government Officers, not even when he was summoned to Bassian by Mr. Macnabb and interrogated." Drawing the inference from all this the Commissioner stated : "It is therefore quite evident that he kept the Government in the dark as to the proceedings of his followers." He was not satisfied with Baba Ram Singh's reply that being "ignorant of our (British) laws" he thought that "there was no obligation resting on him to report the matter to the Government." Firmly believing that "to allow such a man to be at liberty is in the highest degree dangerous," Forsyth at the end of the letter prayed for the sanction of his action and the issue of warrants[1] under Regulation III of 1818 "for the detention in custody of Ram Singh and

1. The warrants were issued on 22nd January, while all arrests had been made before that—a strange thing!

those of his Subas who, during the next day or two, shall be apprehended and forwarded to the Magistrate of Allahabad."

The action of Forsyth was promptly endorsed by the Punjab Government, as it was bound to be, having been taken under the express instructions of the same authority. The Punjab Government then prepared a strong case against Ram Singh for detention without trial and submitted it with a whole array of enclosures to the Government of India on 7th February 1872. "The attacks on Malodh and Malerkotla following so immediately one after the other," it was pointed out[1], "decided His Honor the Lieut. Governor to deport Ram Singh and his most important Subas from the Punjab ; and the information which has since been received and forwarded to the Government of India, together with the evidence forming the enclosures to this letter taken in connection with the proceedings at Amritsar and Raikot and the evidence recorded for several years past of the tendency of the Kuka teaching and the character of its teachers confirm the Lieut. Governor in the conviction that the deportation was necessary." It was emphasised that "Ram Singh and his Subas should be confined at a distance from the scene of their intrigues, at such a place and in such a manner as to render their rescue or escape or return to the Punjab impossible."

Regarding the complicity of Ram Singh in the Kuka rising, it was stressed that "his own statement recorded by Mr. Forsyth....is conclusive as to his own knowledge of the intentions of his followers to put a stop to the slaughter of kine by the murder of butchers for which he admits that his permission was asked before the perpetration of the crimes at Amritsar and Raikot." Ram Singh had stated that he refused permission for these acts, but "it may be presumed," said the Punjab Government, "that the direct evidence as to his complicity by

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

permission or instigation is true, since his followers would not have adopted a line of conduct of which their chief had expressed disapproval." As regards the events at Malodh and Maler Kotla, the Lieut. Governor was at pains to point out : "It is impossible to disconnect Ram Singh from the action taken by his followers in the recent outbreak. It was from the village of Bhainee that the band departed on their expedition, and it is shown that the information that Ram Singh was at first stated to have given to the police of the intentions of the party was of the most meagre description and given not voluntarily but after express interrogation by the Deputy Inspector."

On the general political designs of the Kukas, the following observation of the Lieut. Governor is significant : "The evidence in the present proceedings is summed up by the Commissioner in the note dated 1st February, which forms an enclosure to the present proceedings. This evidence affords strong proof that there was an intention of an organised rising of the sect in the Punjab, although it is probable that the undisciplined eagerness of some of the Kukas precipitated matters and insured the failure of the design. The ambition of the Kuka sect to obtain political power and to restore the Khalsa rule has for some time been notorious and that there was a belief among the Kukas that the time of action had arrived is strengthened by the fact of a considerable number having sold their lands and property. The opinion of native gentlemen of known loyalty regarding the tendency of the teaching of Ram Singh and the objects at which he aimed was entirely in accordance with that at which the Hon'ble Lieut. Governor has arrived, and His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala and other influential gentlemen had strongly advised the arrest and removal of Ram Singh from the country."

The action of the Punjab Government was duly con-

firmed by the Central Government. Baba Ram Singh was taken to the Fort of Allahabad in the first instance. As that place was considered too near the Punjab, he was soon after removed to Rangoon. No trial was held for him, because no trial in a strictly legal sense could be successful against him in a court of law. The authorities were worried that in case the trial failed, the consequences would be very unfavourable to the preservation of public peace.

Besides Baba Ram Singh, his prominent and influential Subas were also arrested and detained in the Allahabad Fort, also known as the Allahabad Central Jail. The names of these Subas were Sahib Singh, Rur Singh, Lakha Singh, Kanh Singh, Brahma Singh, Jawahar Singh, Maluk Singh, Man Singh, Hukma Singh and Pahara Singh. The eleventh man was Sardar Mangal Singh of Raipur[1], who was arrested and made over to the British Government by the Maharaja of Patiala. A detailed enquiry into the case of each one of them was made by Macnabb, who not long afterwards submitted his findings with some recommendations as to the period of detention each should undergo[2]. According to them, Sahib Singh, Lakha Singh, Kanh Singh and Jawahar Singh were each to be detained in banishment for life, Brahma Singh and Pahara Singh for ten years, Man Singh for 3 years, Rur Singh and Maluk Singh for two years and Hukma Singh for one year. In the case of Mangal Singh it was suggested that he should be released as he had recanted Kukaism and was willing to give guarantee for his future good conduct. Both the Local and Central Governments overruled the above recommendations of Macnabb and decided to keep all in detention indefinitely and no mercy was to be shown to any, not even to Mangal Singh the recanter[3]. Giving his remarks on the report of Macnabb, the Lieut. Governor, Punjab[4], said

1. Some say, of Bishanpur.
2. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284.
3. However, Mangal Singh was released after a few months only.
4. Ibid.

that he agreed "generally in the conclusions arrived at by Mr. Macnabb, but does not see much advantage in fixing terms of imprisonment in proportion to the degree of danger to be apprehended in each case," and added that "the expediency of releasing the men will mainly depend on the state of feeling in the province."

As to the causes of the detention of the Subas, each case was assessed separately. Sahib Singh was the most dangerous man, "Ram Singh's ambassador in the recent mission to Nipal," "Ram Singh's expected successor," "his confidential Soobah," "educated, ambitious, designing, always edging on Ram Singh to fresh movements." "He probably was the main leader of the active and political portion of the sect." Macnabb's warning about him was that "Kookaism would at once revive and become troublesome, if he be ever allowed to return to the Punjab." Lakha Singh and Kanh Singh were placed in the same category. The former was dubbed as "peculiarly characterised by his turbulence and readiness for disturbance," and also as "conspicuous in sending off and encouraging the band of men who went to attack Mullair Kotla." Brahma Singh was charged with having "for years systematically preached sedition and ultimate rebellion." He was placed in the same category as Lakha Singh, Sahib Singh and Kanh Singh. He was viewed not as "more of a fanatic and less of a political adventurer" as Macnabb thought, but "as the more dangerous because the more sincere." Jawahar Singh was not regarded as dangerous as the above Subas, but he was regarded as culpable as others, being in the knowledge of every scheme of the Kukas. Moreover, on account of "his position with Ram Singh and his own personal reputation for sanctity," his perpetual detention was considered a great political necessity. Mangal Singh was considered as "one of the principal and least excusable of the conspirators." The remaining five Subas—Rur Singh, Man Singh, Maluk Singh, Pahara Singh and

Hukma Singh—"are", it was said, "evidently men of less importance, and from the part they played, of less ability than the others. They are rather unscrupulous and daring instruments, perhaps, than able leaders. Still they have all deeply and conspicuously committed themselves by their acts."

The over-all charge laid against the above Kuka leaders was that "almost beyond moral doubt all the prisoners have been concerned in crimes which would have subjected them to transportation for life, if proved. Conspiring to wage war against the Queen, seditious preaching and teaching, abetment of murder,—these are the offences with one or more of which every one of the prisoners is, at least on very strong grounds, charged."

However, as in the case of Ram Singh, no Suba was brought to open trial in a court of law and the original detention under Regulation III of 1818 was made permanent. There was of course a good deal of discussion on the subject both at Lahore and Calcutta and there was also some correspondence on it between the two. The Central Government was favourably inclined to having a trial, but ultimately it accepted the plea of the Local Government that such a course would be harmful to public peace, because it might not only not be successful in all cases but might also benefit Kukaism by arousing public sympathy for it[1].

After some time, these notable Kuka leaders were removed from the Allahabad Fort and sent to different places : Rur Singh, Maluk Singh and Pahara Singh to the Asirgarh Fort ; Jawahar Singh, Lakha Singh and Brahma Singh to Moulmein; and Sahib Singh and Kanh Singh to Aden.

III

It was but natural that after the apprehension of

1. Kuka Papers, Pp. 108-109—quoted in Jaswant Singh, op. cit., P. 133.

Ram Singh and his Subas, the Headquarters of the Kuka Movement should become the target of British wrath. Hardly had the sun risen on the 18th morning when Lieut. Col. Baillie, at the head of a police party and 25 military sowars, reached Bhaini Sahib. Immediately, a cordon was thrown around the gurdwara. All the inmates (about 190 people) were turned out and guarded at a point outside the village, while the entire place was subjected to the rigours of a merciless search. The fruits of the whole ransacking operation were 36 safajangs or takuas (long-handled axes), 6 gandasas (choppers), 2 khokharis, lathis and quoits (number not given), some papers (nothing important), 1500 rupees, some gold and silver ornaments (value not stated) and some precious clothes. The money, ornaments and embroidered clothes were straightway locked in a sealed box and sent off to Ludhiana to be deposited there in the state treasury, while Baba Ram Singh's clothes of every day use were ordered to be placed in the custody of the Sadar Office of Ludhiana. All other articles were forfeited by the Government.

Of the people found in the gurdwara and turned out by Baillie on the morning of the 18th, nineteen were allowed to return. They were Baba Jassa Singh (Baba Ram Singh's father), Budh Singh (Baba Ram Singh's younger brother and successor, better known as Baba Hari Singh), Bibi Nandan (daughter of Ram Singh) and her children, Waryam Singh, manager of the shop at Bhaini, Makhan Singh, a personal attendant of Ram Singh and eleven other people who looked after the cattle, 82 in number. But they were allowed to live only in the small ancestral house of the family. The gurdwara was locked up indefinitely. None was to be allowed to live there and no function, not even of the innocuous religious nature, was permissible within its precincts.

The remaining people, 172 in number, were imme-

d‸tely ordered to march off on foot towards Ludhiana under a heavy police guard. The party comprising, among others, old men, women and children, all without food since morning, was made to complete the arduous journey of 12 kos on absolutely empty stomachs, but they bravely bore all these hardships. At Ludhiana 122 out of them were released and ordered to go to their respective places with the warning that if they again came to Bhaini, they would be put behind the bars. The remaining 50 refused to go to their places by saying that they had no place other than Bhaini to look to. It was about these people that Forsyth said in his letter to the Punjab Government, dated 20th January[1], that they would be asked "to furnish security," or in default "would be incarcerated for a period of two years according to law." The reason, as explained by him, was that they "had no home and no ostensible means of living, being in fact a dangerous class of this sect, who having sold all that they possessed held themselves in readiness to perform any act that their leaders may order."

Before Lieut. Col. Baillie left Bhaini, he set up there, as per orders given to him on the 17th by the Commissioner Forsyth, a police post consisting of a sub-inspector and twenty constables. The object was to keep a vigilant eye on the local Kukas, to get regular reports on them and to prevent the visits of any outside Kukas to the place[2]. This police post was a running sore for the members of Baba Ram Singh's family, who were on the slightest suspicion subjected to the indignity of searching. Their movements even within the village were restricted and closely watched. The running sore continued to run and fester till 1922 when the obnoxious police post was at last lifted under great political pressure from the rising nationalist forces in the country.

1. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356—Kuka Outbreak, p.20.
2. Eight years later a slight relaxation was granted by permitting a limited number of people (not more than ten at a time) to visit it.

On reaching Ludhiana Lieut. Col. Baillie submitted a report of his late proceedings to the Commissioner at Malodh. This report was forwarded to the Punjab Government on the 21st January. Since Baillie's report had a reference to the statement of a few lambardars (village headmen) of the vicinity as to the rumour that there were some hidden deposits of arms and money, Mr. Jackson (A.S.P., Ludhiana) was sent to Bhaini Sahib a few days after. Several places were dug up to a considerable depth, but nothing was found to show for the hard work that poor Jackson had put into the job.

IV

Another important aspect of the Government retribution was to place the Kuka organisation under a "complete system of surveillance and report" to guard against the possibility of any new Kuka rising in future. The stringent measures taken in this connection were explained by the Punjab Government in a confidential letter[1] dated 2nd April 1872 addressed to the Government of India. It was pointed out : "The principal leaders of the Kooka sect have been deported from the province. All those of influence who remain are under surveillance and their movements are carefully watched. The headmen of rural circles (Zaildars) and the headmen of villages have been enjoined to report, under penalty of deprivation of office or other punishments, the movements of all Kookas within their villages or circles. The assembly of more than five Kookas has been forbidden throughout the Province. The carrying, in public places, of axes, iron-bound sticks and other weapons, which, if not coming under the provisions of Arms Act, are still formidable in the event of riot, has been strictly prohibited. The complete system of surveillance and report has been established with reference to the whole sect and the Lieut. Governor believes that

1. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 11.

no movement of the smallest importance can possibly take place without the Government being instantly aware of the same." Eighteen days earlier on 15th March the same authority had sought the permission of the Supreme Government to dismiss all Kukas serving in the Punjab Police. The necessary permission was granted on 16th April 1872[1].

The states of Patiala, Nabha and Maler Kotla did not lag far behind the Punjab in the anti-Kuka measures. In particular may be mentioned the state of Patiala. The Maharaja of Patiala had throughout been very active in the suppression of Kukaism. Some of his measures in this regard have already been seen, for instance : his prompt compliance with Cowan's requests for some guns and troops for Maler Kotla; his help in the apprehension of 68 Kuka insurgents after the attack of Kotla ; and his arrest of his relative Sardar Mangal Singh of Raipur (Bishanpur) with a view to handing him over to the British Government. Even before the British Government had taken any step against the Kuka organisation, he issued a *Firman*[2] on the 19th January, a copy of which was sent to the Punjab Government the following day. The *Firman* was intended to strike awe in the general public and to annihilate Kukaism in the state. Urgent instructions were issued to the Nazims of the districts to effect the arrests of the Subas still at large and all those Kukas who had visited Bhaini on the occasion of the last Maghi fair. The latter were to be kept in detention till such time as they were able to furnish some satisfactory evidence showing that they were not involved in the Malodh and Maler Kotla attacks. Orders were also issued, under the same *Firman*, to effect the confiscation of property of the Patiala subjects who had participated in the recent Kuka attacks and had since been blown

1. Home Judicial (A) Progs. April 1872, Nos. 153-156.
2. Kuka Papers, P. 253—quoted in Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, op. cit., P. 206.

off from guns. Besides, all Kuka assemblies were banned and all Kuka movements were placed under a system of strict surveillance. The headmen of villages were sternly warned that they would be held responsible, if they permitted the Kukas of their areas to move beyond their boundaries.

The question may be asked : Why did these states behave in the manner they did ? There may be two reasons for their somewhat odd and unpatriotic behaviour. One is that the Kukas were building up in their territories a stronghold of their power. They were not only growing in numbers, but also netting in members of the influential landed aristocracy[1]. Ordinarily speaking, they should not have been against the indigenous rulers, for their main target was the British Government. But it was not possible to draw a line between the two, as the Indian rulers were in all matters toeing the line of the foreign rulers. Secondly, after 1858 the British Paramountcy was firmly established and the Indian rulers were reduced to the status of mere feudatories of the British Crown. They had hardly any independence in important policy formulations. Being completely under the thumb of the Paramount Power, they simply could not, without imperilling their guddis, act in a manner antagonistic to, or even materially different from, the one adopted by the British Government.

V

We have seen above the mighty stunning blows that were dealt out to the Kukas in the wake of their attacks on Malodh and Maler Kotla. It will be unfair to them, if a few words are not said about the heroic manner in which they stood up to all these blows. Describing the conduct of Kuka prisoners at Maler Kotla, Cowan said

1. Home Judicial, June 1832, Progs. 112-132.

that they were "most defiant and unruly (which means that they were not at all cowed down even when confronted with sure death), they poured forth the most abusive language towards the Government and the Chiefs of Native States[1]." "All of them admitted," he went on,[2] "that they were present at the attacks on Malodh and Kotla and gloried in the act." Giving a concrete example of this, he mentioned that "one of them escaped from the guards and made a furious attack on me, seizing me by the beard and endeavouring to strangle me and he was a very powerful man; I had considerable difficulty in releasing myself. He then made a most savage (in fact, heroic) attack on some officers of the native states, who were standing near me. These officers drew their swords and cut him down[3]." Lieut. Col. E. Perkins, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, gives a similar impression about these prisoners. He had the occasion to meet them and have some conversation with their leaders, Hira Singh and Lehna Singh, when they were on the way to Maler Kotla on the 17th. He writes : "Both Hira Singh and Lehna Singh, the leaders, are taken. They are generally well dressed and well-to-do men; but have the appearance of bold, determined-looking fellows....several of them (the prisoners) were exceedingly abusive and declaring that they would have no Government but their own etc. etc[4]."

Another remarkable example of the Kuka prisoners' heroism is their refusal to be tied to the guns. There is a strong tradition prevalent among the Namdharis that they were adament till the last that they would not be tied to the guns. An inference to this effect may as well be drawn by reading between the lines of Mr. Cowan's allusion to their "most defiant and unruly" behaviour, noticed a little earlier. Even if it be admitted that they were bound up, it cannot be gainsaid that it must be

1. Parliamentary Paper, 1872, No. 356, P. 16.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, P. 13.

by use of force and against their wishes expressly and persistently expressed.

A beautiful account of the high spirit that animated the Kuka prisoners on the eve of their deaths is found in the "*Satgur Bilas*" on page 418 :

> "The blue-eyed Farangi said to Hira Singh, "Why have you created disturbance ?" Hira Singh replied, "We do not want the Farangi raj. We want our own brothers' raj'. Until your 'raj' is ended, we will not cease to create disturbance; we will take heads and give heads; we will not rest until you are expelled from here; we shall be born again and again to destroy your power."

They attacked like heroes in the full knowledge of the fact that their intention was already known to the Government; they fought like heroes; they surrendered like heroes; and the most important of all, they died like heroes.

The conduct of Baba Ram Singh and his Subas was as it could be expected of the leaders of a great movement. They neither flinched nor faltered and faced up to the dangers in a manly way. Mangal Singh was the only notable exception. Unfortunately, he was not made of the stuff of which martyrs are made. This may be due to his class origin or his personal weakness or both, but he was no true representative of the Kuka character. Below the top-level, too, the Kukas acquitted themselves admirably. People like Gulab Singh and Dal Singh, who turned approvers in the cases of Amritsar and Raikot, were so few that they could be easily counted on the fingers of a single hand.

CHAPTER VII

CONTACTS WITH KASHMIR, NEPAL AND RUSSIA

THE Kuka contacts with Kashmir and Nepal before 1872 and with Russia after 1872 (more precisely from the outbreak of the Second Afghan War) should dispel the doubts, if any, as to their political aspirations. Why should a religious and social movement, one may ask, interest itself in building up the kind of contacts that we notice in the case of the Kukas ? It will be unfair to explain them away by saying that they were merely the product of a relentless persecution policy of the British Government, because this persecution policy itself was the product of political activities of the Kukas. It was rightly said by Col. G. McAndrew in October 1871 that the "attempt of Ram Singh to get a party of his followers under arms in Kashmir, also a similar move in Nepal, goes far to show that he is working outside the sphere of a mere guru or religious teacher[1]."

The Kuka desire to build up contacts with the semi-independent Kashmir and independent Nepal was motivated by a two-fold object : (i) to win powerful allies in the hope (fond, we know it today) that they might aid them in their efforts against the Government; (ii) to have some Kukas trained and disciplined in the military art, unseen by the ever-vigilant eye of the Britisher. Their task was greatly facilitated by the presence at both the

1. Memorandum of Col. McAndrew dated 13th Oct., 1871. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-63,

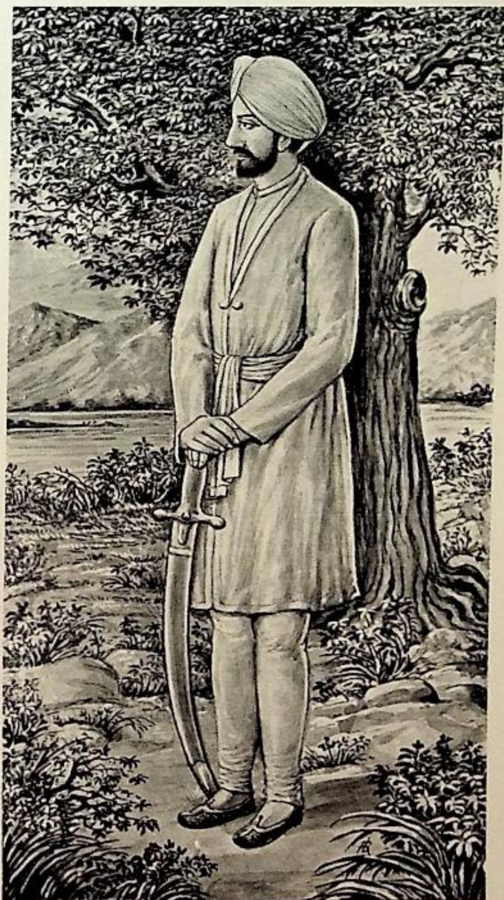
courts of a certain amount of antipathy[1] towards the British. The Maharaja of Kashmir, Ranbir Singh, was unhappy, because the British were interfering too much in his internal affairs. The state of Kashmir was situated near the north-western frontier and its borders were not far removed from Russia, an enemy country for Great Britain. Therefore, most of the British interference in the affairs of this state was inevitable. But to Ranbir Singh it appeared part of a calculated design to whittle down his autonomy. There was no such danger to Nepal. Even so, it was not happy with the British, because the latter had not properly rewarded her neutrality during the critical period of the Revolt of 1857. Rana Jang Bahadur, the prime minister and virtual ruler of the state, had entertained the hope of recovering the territories lost in 1816, but when this hope seemed nowhere near fulfilment, he grew antipathetic towards the British.

Once the two parties were in a mood to come closer to each other, it was not difficult to establish links. In the case of Kashmir, it was done through Col. Hukma Singh who thought well of the Kuka tenets[2] or through the Vedanti[3] who wielded great influence with the Maharaja and headed the anti-British faction at the court. The latter, it is said, had intimate contacts with some prominent Kukas of the districts of Sialkot and Gujranwala. As regards Nepal, the presence there of a

1. One of the important forms this antipathy took was to intrigue with Russia. In 1867 two Muslims of the Madari tribe visited Gen. Kaufmann on behalf of the Maharaja of Kashmir and brought for him some presents and letters from the General. Immediately after this, two agents of the General visited the Maharaja and carried some letters from him. The Maharaja's own cousin, Gopal Singh, went to the General in 1872 in the guise of a fakir. In 1875, Bhagwan Das Dat, the spiritual leader of the Maharaja, visited Tashkand. Dhili Misar of Amritsar was his agent in Central Asia for several years. For. Deptt. (Secret-F) August 1889, Cons. 114-115.

2. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-63—Confidential Report of S.P., Gujranwala, dated 7th Oct., 1871.

3. Ibid. Translation of a letter from a native correspondent.



COL. HIRA SINGH SADHAURA

number of Sikh military instructors now for nearly two decades paved the way for building a direct approach to the ruler. It is also possible to think that the relations between Nepal and the Sikhs going back to the time of Ranjit Singh had greatly eased the path of negotiations between the Kukas and the Rana of Nepal.

KUKA COMPANIES IN KASHMIR

There is enough material in the National Archives of India giving particulars of the Kuka Companies in the army of Jammu and Kashmir. The Government first discovered their existence in November 1869, although they had been by then about a year in existence. The intelligence report that "the Maharaja of Kashmir was raising a Kuka regiment and that each recruit received a certificate from Ram Singh before setting out for Kashmir[1]" was too serious to be lightly passed over by the Government. Hence, immediately after this a deputy inspector was sent to Jammu "to learn particulars concerning the composition and interior economy of this corps[2]." He returned in February 1870 and submitted a report which said that some six or seven months earlier Hira Singh of Sadhaura (Ambala District) with about thirty three Kukas had gone to the Maharaja of Kashmir, who had promised to form them into a regiment, if they could collect enough men to constitute one. After that recruiting was commenced in right earnest. There were about 150 Kukas in service at that time and Hira Singh was the commandant. About their service conditions the report added : "The monthly pay of the rank and file was equivalent to ten chilki rupees or one rupee in excess of the salary received by the ordinary troops of the Maharaja, part of the pay was paid in flour; men had been drilled, but were not regularly armed; when they went on parade, arms were served out

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284—Appendix 3, P. 2466.
2. Ibid, Appendix 4, P. 2469.

to them, which were deposited into the store after the manoeuvre, and uniforms were issued to them." In conclusion it was pointed out that "the Kukas were discontented and deserted in considerable numbers, and on the whole the Maharaja did not appear pleased with the experiment."

That the above conclusion was wrong was proved by some reports received later in the year 1870. Several other persons were despatched after the above-mentioned deputy inspector. A report received in October put the number of the Kuka Companies in Kashmir at somewhere between 200 and 250. "The men were armed and drilled," it was now stated.

The Inspector General of Police, Punjab, took a very serious view of the progress of the Kuka enlistment in Kashmir. In his annual report on the Kuka sect for the year 1870 he deeply regretted that there was no law to check a native chief from enlisting people of the British dominions. He warned the Government by saying that "a religious leader should possess the opportunity of passing his disciples through the ranks of regiments, from which they can desert whenever their spiritual guide may consider their temporal aid necessary to forward his political aims[1]."

It is difficult to say what notice was taken of the above warning. Apparently, no heed seems to have been paid to it. Due to this or some other reason for the next 7 or 8 months the Police Department grew lukewarm or lax in watching the Kukas in Kashmir, and hence for some time there was no further addition to information on the subject. Then suddenly in September 1871 the news was received from the Jhelum District that the Kuka Companies had been disbanded by the Maharaja of Kashmir. In the following month similar reports were received from several other districts. These reports were based on official inquiries made from the Kuka

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284, Appendix 5, P. 2471.

groups returning from Kashmir, and they threw considerable fresh light on many hitherto obscure aspects of the Kuka contingent.

The beginning of the contingent, as established now, was made some time in 1868. Its pioneer, Hira Singh, was a jagirdar of Sadhaura and "one of Guru Ram Singh's Mohants and Subahs[1]." He went "by direction of Guru Ram Singh" to the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, "who gave him leave to enlist a regiment of Kukas and appointed him to command it in subordination to Col. Hukma Singh[2]." Hira Singh then returned to Ram Singh at Bhaini and "obtained permission (through Suba Kanh Singh then in attendance upon Ram Singh) to take 175 Kukas with him at once to Jammu[3]." These men were formed into two Companies. There is a clear reference in the reports that Suba Kanh Singh played a very active role in the origination of the Kuka contingent.

The Kuka recruits, according to the reports, received their initial military training at Jammu where they stayed for a period of about four months. From there they were sent to garrison the fort of Nowshera where they remained three months. From here they were transferred to Srinagar where they remained one year in the cantonment of Batmaloo. From there "they were removed to Mozufferabad, from Mozufferabad to Kathoe Fort, then to the Doputta Fort, from where Sardar Hira Singh took leave and went on a visit to Guru Ram Singh, the command meanwhile devolving on the Adjutant Tara Singh, son of Chatter Singh and nephew of the late Col. Mea Singh, of the Sikh service and at one time Governor of Kashmir[4]." When Hira Singh returned from leave, only 70 men remained, "the rest having left in consequence of being irregularly and badly paid[5]."

1. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-63.
A confidential report of the District Supdt., Police, Gujranwala District, dated 7th October 1871.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

It is further shown by the reports that "the Kukas never had any uniforms issued to them" and only a limited number had firearms or swords ; the remainder did duty with lathis[1]. As to the question of pay, it is shown that both the Commandant Hira Singh and the Adjutant Tara Singh received Rs. 30/- each per month. Some of them got Rs. 15,12,11 or 10. The minimum pay was Rs. 9/- per month. The payment was, as was customary then in the Indian states, most irregular. When the Kukas were dismissed sometime in August or September 1871, the state owed to them ten months' pay which was never paid.

One of the reporters, Mr. C. Girdlestone, writes that "during their stay there (at Srinagar) they were pampered and petted. Presents were frequently bestowed on them irrespective of their pay and a prominent place was assigned to any who liked to go to Durbar. It was no uncommon thing for a party of them to attend Durbar after morning parade[2]."

The afore-mentioned reports are also informative on what led to the sudden disbandment of the Kuka contingent. It is said that the Maharaja's decision was due to "a remark of a British Officer, overheard by some one, to the effect that he was surprised at the Maharaja employing men whom the British Government would not take into its ranks[3]." It is also mentioned here that "on receipt of the news of the butcher massacre, the Maharaja sent for the Kuka Companies and disbanded them[4]."

While all these things may be true, an important factor in the Kukas' dismissal seems to be the influence of Dewan Kirpa Ram who headed the pro-British

1. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-63. A d.o. letter from Turton Smith, District Supdt., Police, Amritsar, dated 9th Oct. 1871.
2. Foreign Political (A), Feby. 1872, Cons. 39-49.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

faction at the Jammu Durbar. He was a political rival of the Vedanti and was opposed from the very beginning to the latter's patronage of Kukas. There is among the reports a letter from an Indian news-reporter, which says that some time in 1870 Dewan Kirpa Ram "represented to the Maharaja that no object was served by employing men of this sect whose tenets were opposed to the Hindu religion. Now that the intelligence has been received of the murder of butchers by men of this sect, the Maharaja has commended the foresight of Dewan Kirpa Ram and has ordered all Kukas to be dismissed, who are now employed in Mozufferabad and Gilgit etc[1]."

However, in the final analysis neither the influence of Dewan Kirpa Ram nor any other factor mentioned above was of the basic character. The factor that really governed the situation and was responsible for the mercurial behaviour of the Maharaja was the inherent weakness of his position or, for that matter, the position of all the Indian rulers at the time. He, like several of his fellow-princes in India, was extremely resentful of the Paramount Power's increasing encroachments on his autonomy and was not unwilling to ingratiate himself with any anti-British elements with a view to strengthening his position, but at the same time was so mortally afraid of the British that even a slight indication or a casual remark showing displeasure would be enough to set him ashivering in his shoes. The fraternisation with the Kukas lasted only so long as he thought that it was hidden from the British eyes. The moment he realized that the secret was disclosed, he summarily dismissed all the Kukas to show that he was, like others, the most loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen Victoria.

So far as the Kukas are concerned, their efforts did not meet with much success. To a certain extent they

1. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-63. The letter is given here in translation.

were themselves responsible for this. They started their agitation a little prematurely, so that their intentions "became known too soon and led to the nucleus of the military assemblage or force in Kashmere territory being broken up ; otherwise the numbers would have largely increased[1]." But although a failure—and given the vast British resources, it could scarcely have been a success, even if it were not disturbed prematurely—the significance of the thing lies not so much in its having proved abortive as in the fact of its having been attempted at all. By it a new dimension is added to the Kuka Movement : it shows the extent to which they were prepared to go in their political schemes.

It will not be irrelevant to mention here that the contacts between the Kukas and the Maharaja of Kashmir did not stop altogether with the disbandment of the Kuka Companies. Both the parties were anxious to maintain them in some secret way. The Maharaja, sore as he was with the British, started indulging in intrigues with the Russians. We learn from the Gulab Khan papers[2] that some of his agents, namely Karam Chand and Mansukh, were operating as emissaries between him and the Russian authorities in Central Asia. The Kukas, too, were led by their antagonism to the British to develop friendly relations with the Russians. The identity of interests made the Maharaja and the Kukas look upon each other as friends. This may be clear from Baba Budh Singh's writing in one of his communications to the Governor of Turkistan that "the hill Raja is our friend[3]", as also from the fact that in 1880 Suba Gurcharan Singh brought a letter for the Maharaja from the Russians[4].

1. Home Judicial, 13th January 1872, Progs. 52-63.
2. Foreign Department (Secret), January 1882, Cons. 558-599.
3. Foreign Department (Secret-E), January 1884, Cons. 40-95.
4. Foreign Department (Secret), January 1882, Cons. 558-599.

KUKA EMBASSY TO NEPAL

As noticed earlier, it was through the instrumentality of the Sikhs in the service of the Nepal Durbar that Kuka contacts were effected with that country. They were 16 in number. One of them was the adjutant of a Gurkha regiment and another held the rank of a Jamadar. Of them Hari Singh, Kirpal Singh, Bir Singh, Bishen Singh, Nihal Singh and Asa Singh were fairly well-known in the official circles of Nepal. The last named two were on the personal staff of Rana Jung Bahadur. Originally, they were not Kukas. But gradually, they began to be drawn closer to Kukaism for three reasons : (i) they were soldiers who had at one time served in the Khalsa Army of Lahore and taken part in the wars against the British and therefore, they liked the patriotic call of the Kukas ; (ii) during their furloughs in the Punjab they witnessed from close quarters the rapid rise of Kukaism and were deeply impressed by it ; (iii) the propaganda of Kukaism by a reputed Kuka Kishan Singh (also known as Hari Singh) in Nepal from 1868 onward made the impression still deeper.

When Rana Jung Bahadur learnt about the growing popularity of Kukaism, he felt interested and expressed a desire to meet Baba Ram Singh. This was quickly conveyed to the Kuka leader who, without any delay, decided to send an embassy to Nepal, consisting of his most prominent Subas, Sahib Singh and Kanh Singh. Referring to Ram Singh's determination "to send a legate to the Ruler of Nepal," the Punjab Police report on the Kuka sect for the year 1870 writes : "The story amongst the Kookas is, that the Maharana wrote to Ram Singh and asked him to send some men for the Nepal regiments. To this Ram Singh is stated to have replied—"I will not yet despatch any Kookas, nor will I come myself, but I send this present[1]."

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273—284—Appendix 5, p. 2470.

The Kuka embassy with a couple of Punjabi buffaloes and mules as presents for the Maharana visited Nepal during the winter of 1870-71 and had several conversations with Sir Jung Bahadur. The latter made many enquiries from the Kuka leaders "about their leader Ram Singh and with reference to their numbers and position in the Punjab and appeared to have been impressed with a sense of the strength and standing they had already obtained in the country.[1]" The object of the mission, in the words of the Rana himself, was to "ascertain if there was any opening for their people in the Goorkha Army.[2]" Apparently, the Kuka leaders had every reason to be satisfied. They were shown every respect and on departure were given a hearty send-off with some valuable presents for Baba Ram Singh, such as 500 rupees in cash, one necklace of gold, one doshala, one horse and two Khukhris.

The Kuka approach to the Nepal ruler was naturally resented by the British. They were anxious to know what had transpired between the Kuka Subas and the Rana. For this purpose Raja Shivraj Singh of Kashipur was commissioned to visit Nepal and gather information secretly. The report he submitted was, however, not satisfactory. Then, the Government of India sent a confidential letter to their Resident at Khatmandu on 23rd October 1871 asking him to ascertain information on the subject from the Ruler himself. While communicating the result of his interview with the Rana to the Supreme Government, the Resident expressed his surprise at the open and frank manner in which the Rana had spoken about the object of the Kuka mission and the potential danger of Kukaism in general. For instance, the Rana was reported as saying : "Unless well looked after, they (the Kukas) would probably prove a

1. For. Pol. (A), February 1872, Cons. 39—49. Col. R.C. Lawrence, British Resident, Nepal, to C.U. Aitchison, Secy. to Govt. of India, dated 22nd Nov. 1871.

2. Ibid.

source of trouble to the British Goverment[1]". "He dwelt strongly," wrote the Resident, "upon the fact of this new sect which has so recently appeared in the Punjab, already numbering about 3,00,000 followers, all professing implicit belief in their Guru and ready to do his bidding, whether for good or evil.[2]" The inference drawn by the Resident from the frank talk of the Rana was that "no doubt the individuals in question did not come to Nepal merely to bring a couple of buffaloes to Sir Jung Bahadur, but whatever may have been their real object, I doubt very much their having attained it and I think I may safely say that no encouragement was given them."

In support of his view he advanced the argument that "it is opposed to the policy of the Durbar to recruit the ranks of the Goorkha Army with aliens and the only foreigners they can enlist are men qualified to act as drill instructors or as artificers in their magazines. [3]"

A copy of the Resident's letter (cited above) and of the letter to which it was a reply were duly forwarded to the Punjab Government on 30th November 1871, with a remark of the Secretary Aitchison that "Sir Jung Bahadoor told" him "at Sonepoor that there were about 16 Sikhs in his service, all of whom he had dismissed[4]."

The particulars of the Resident's letter and the Secretary's note, as stated above, combined with the Tikka Babur Jung Bahadur's voluntary offer[5] of his personal services to the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army after the attacks of Malodh and Maler Kotla, tend to give an enigmatic appearance to the attitude of the ruler ef Nepal towards the Kukas. It is a matter to be probed further whether the Ranas were only trying to be clever with the British or like the Maharaja of Kashmir simply revealing the inherent contradictions

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Foreign Department (B), February 1872, Cons, 132—133.

of their weak position. It may, however, be pointed out that Nepal's policy towards the British was, like that of many Indian states, one of duplicity, a policy which came so handy to them in the circumstances they were placed in. The domineering behaviour of the Imperial Power was an anathema, but the requisite strength to resist it was lacking. The mental outlook that was conditioned in this way found a natural and inevitable expression in duplicity and double-dealing.

KUKA EFFORTS FOR RUSSIAN AID

Except for the solitary reference that "Bishen Singh, a disciple of Mahant Gurchurn Singh, had been sent to Russia before Ram Singh was deported" and that he had "entered the Russian service at the desire of Guru Ram Singh [1]" "to get aid for the Kukas," the Kuka efforts for Russian aid against the British, by and large, belong to the period following the year 1872. These efforts were distinct from those connected with Kashmir and Nepal in the earlier period in so far as they were motivated solely by the desire to utilize the armed might of Russia for the expulsion of the British from India and had no aim of securing training facilities for Kuka soldiers, such as we find in the case of Kashmir and Nepal.

The Kuka endeavours in regard to Russian assistance, to be correctly evaluated, must be examined in the context of two factors : (i) Kuka problem after 1872 ; (ii) Anglo-Russian relations during the period.

To take the Kuka problem first. After the mass of executions and deportations of 1872 the foremost problems to be attended to were to reconstruct the organisation and to keep up the morale of its members. In the reconstruction of the Kuka organisation the decisive role was that of Baba Budh Singh, the younger brother of

1. Foreign Department (Secret-F), August 1889, "Bishen Singh, Arora of Kabul, Kuka Suba," Cons. 114-115.

Baba Ram Singh. He quietly filled up the vacuum at Bhaini caused by the detention of Ram Singh. The result was that despite the permanent police post stationed there and all sorts of irritants[1] and restrictions, the fascination of a visit to Bhaini Sahib remained strong, if not as strong as before. Somehow or other, the Kuka pilgrims found their way to the doorstep of Baba Budh Singh. They would sometimes come disguised and meet the Baba outside in the fields and sometimes as guests of other Kukas of the village and quietly under cover of the night's darkness slip into the Baba's house. And they all brought offerings for their leader. The more important among them discussed with him the problems facing the community. According to an Abstract of Intelligence[2] prepared by the Punjab Police, Baba Budh Singh received at Bhaini Sahib during the three weeks between 12th March and 2nd April (1881) 173 visitors and got from them varying sums totalling Rs. 319-14-0 as offerings. "These sums do not, however," adds the Abstract, "by any means represent Budh Singh's actual weekly income. Between Rs. 200 and 300 are paid to him daily (?) and at the end of each half-year every Kuka pays him a tenth part of his income both in cash and grain. These figures do not include miscellaneous payments made to the Baba by members of the sect...."

Next to the head of the organisation in importance were the Subas. It was most essential that the vacancies caused by the incarceration of the eminent among them should be quickly filled up. With this object in view several new Subas were appointed, of whom the most prominent were[3] :

1. For details of persecution after 1872 see the list of Kukas in Home Iudicial (B), April 1881, Progs. 186-189 ; also Ahluwalia, op. cit., Pp. 190—203.

2. Foreign Department (Secret), January 1882, Cons. 558-599.

3. Ibid; also see the list of Kukas in Home Judicial (B), April 1881, Progs. 186-189.

1. Suba Harnam Singh, of Mandi (Patiala).
2. ,, Samund Singh, of Khote (Ferozepur District).
3. ,, Phula Singh, of Chogawan (Amritsar District).
4. ,, Kanh Singh, of Baja (Faridkot).
5. ,, Gurdit Singh alias Gurdas Singh, of Naiwala (Patiala).
6. ,, Khazan Singh, of Ludhiana.
7. ,, Natha Singh, of Gadriwala (Ferozepur District).
8. ,, Khushal Singh, of Tharajwala (Sirsa).
9. ,, Fateh Singh, of Valtoha.

Similarly, wherever necessary, Naib Subas were appointed to assist in the work of the Subas.

There is no doubt that steps like the ones described above went a long way in repairing the heavy damage caused by the Government's stern and atrocious action of 1872. On account of them the somewhat shaken morale of the Kukas gradually registered a recovery. But perhaps a factor, which aided the recovery more than anything else, was the continuous stream of letters from the leader in exile, Ram Singh. The most important reason why he had been sent out of the country was that there should be no contact whatsoever between him and his numerous followers. In this the Government proved sadly mistaken, because nothing could close the channel of communication completely between the Guru and his disciples : neither the rigours and expenses of an arduous journey nor the manifold dangers involved in it could deter the faithfuls from going to Burma. The letters[1] of Baba Ram Singh, though addressed to separate individuals, were generally intended for wide circulation among the entire fraternity. They invariably placed the maximum emphasis on observance by the Kukas of a high standard of spiritual and moral life. Devotion to

1. There are numerous letters in circulation in the name of Baba Ram Singh. All are not genuine. It is therefore important that the genuine should be separated from the spurious. It appears that many ingenious minds have been at work tempering with the letters to grind their own selfish axes.

God, memorisation of important compositions from the Scriptures, self-discipline, purity, piety, charitableness, hospitality, generosity and social service were particularly underscored as the virtues to be imbibed by all. Also, the social evils of female infanticide and selling and bartering of brides were to be abhorred as before. Another point, which is stressed over and again, is that every boy and girl should learn Gurmukhi letters from the very childhood[1]. The affectionate tone and the persuasive style of Baba Ram Singh's letters could not but leave an indelible mark on the Kukas.

But whatever be the improvements in the morale of the people, it was impossible, after the sledge-hammer action of the Government, for the Kukas openly to challenge its formidable might. The moral of 1872 was too obvious to be forgotten. Nor could the Kukas be intimidated into quiescent submission to the authority. Having been conditioned in a certain manner, they found it impossible to be reconciled to a role of loyalty to the British Crown.

The other factor relating to the context under examination was the character of the Anglo-Russian relations during the period after 1872. Russia had long been expanding in Central Asia. As this expansion had the tendency of reducing the distance between the Asian empires of the two countries, Great Britain and Russia, it was greatly resented by the British. The resentment turned into a phobia, when the Russians occupied Tashkand and Samarkand in quick succession in 1865 and 1868 respectively. In 1867 General Kaufmann was appointed the Governor General of Turkistan. The appointment of a General to the supreme position in Central Asia appeared to the British an indication of further Russian advance. This proved only too true, because the Kingdom of Khiva was overrun by them in

1. Letter No. 50, Dr. Ganda Singh, op. cit., P. 318 ; Home Judicial (B), October 1881, Progs. 188-195.

1873. The conquest of Khiva completed the process of expansion to the northern banks of the Oxus and brought the Russian Empire into close contiguity to the Kingdom of Afghanistan over a long stretch of territory. Khivan independence was wholly destroyed and a considerable Russian force was permanently established in a fort on the Oxus within two marches of the Khan's capital. Soon after the treaty with Bokhara was revised and not long after Khokhand was integrated into the Russian Empire. The developments up to the year 1875 had made the Russian Czar master of the central regions. All this led to an intensification of the tension between Russia and Great Britain.

To save the situation from further deterioration, Great Britain exerted the maximum possible pressure upon the Amir of Afghanistan to obtain some diplomatic and military concessions that would enable her to meet the Russian challenge more effectively. On the Amir's reluctance to oblige the British to the extent and in the manner demanded, an attack was made upon his country in 1878. The conquest of Afghanistan presented no difficulty. The ruler, Amir Sher Ali, fled away and took refuge with the Russians in Turkistan, where he died soon afterwards. The new Amir, Yakub Khan, was a nominee of the British and the treaty of Gandamak concluded with him in 1879 marked the apogee of Lord Lytton's Afghan policy. But this happy state of affairs did not last long, because the Afghan nationalism, excited by the foreign aggression, soon came into play. The British Resident and his escort were all assassinated. The whole country was now thrown into a state of commotion. Lord Lytton strove hard to retrieve the situation, but in vain. Abdur Rehman, a distant member of the ruling family in Afghanistan, who had been biding his time in Russian territory, took advantage of the chaotic situation and entered Afghanistan to become its new ruler. He had a complete success and the British, too,

(after the fall of the Conservative Government in 1880) were compelled to come to terms with him.

However, the end of the Afghan debacle was in no way reflected in any improvement in the relations between Russia and Great Britain. Their relations remained strained as ever. There were disputes between them about the boundary between Afghanistan and Russia. Russia's occupation of Merv, then the Zulifcar pass and then the village of Panjdeh, struck terror into the minds of the British. Specially, the Panjdeh incident, in which the Afghan soldiers were turned out by a Russian force, very nearly precipitated a war in 1885. The long-standing boundary dispute was not settled till 1887. Even after that the mutual suspicions of England and Russia continued till the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907.

We have had above a brief idea of the context in which the minds of the Kuka leaders functioned after 1872. They thought of two predominant political ideas to instil fresh vigour into their anti-British movement. One was to have nothing to do with the Government. All offers or temptations from it were to be absolutely spurned. Realizing that the Government might try to buy over the Kukas and thereby undermine their strength, Baba Ram Singh repeatedly issued forth from his prison-house in Burma strict injunctions against acceptance by any of his men of service under the Government. For instance, in one of his letters he wrote[1] : "No devotee must ever enter Government service. He who does so will suffer much pain. Believe this to be true. I have not written falsely. Now the times are changed. Now is the time of destruction of the British. By the Guru's will, their end is within sight now." Another letter of his warned[2] : "O brethren ! Do none of you continue in their service ; if any do, they will suffer many hardships."

1. Letter No. 31—quoted in Dr. Ganda Singh, op. cit., P. 381; Home Judicial (B), October 1881, Progs. 188—195.

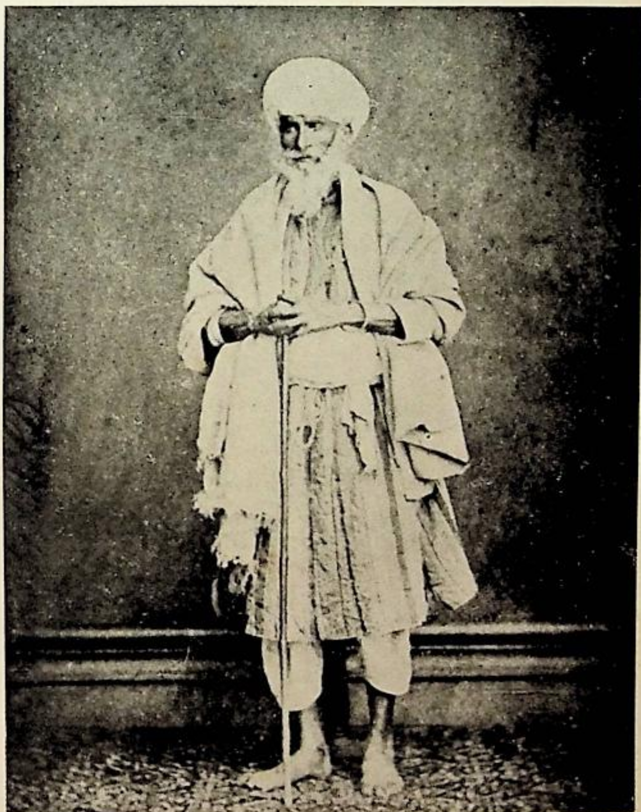
2. Home Judicial, October 1881, Progs. 188—195.

The other idea was to invite Russian aid in the fight against the foreign rulers of the country. They saw nothing wrong in the use of foreign help in the attainment of their political object. The danger involved in inviting military help from an outside power was overshadowed by their bitter antagonism to the rulers of India. The factor of strained relations between Great Britain and Russia at the time greatly encouraged them to believe in the success of the efforts they hoped to make.

In the establishment of contacts and in the conduct of talks with the Russians the principal actors were Suba Gurcharan Singh and Suba Bishen Singh. They brought to their secret jobs the zeal and devotion possible only in men working for an exalted cause. It would be totally wrong to call them spies, because they were not working for money's sake for any government, as for example Gulab Khan and Shankar Rai were. They were working for a patriotic cause under the direction, superintendence and control of the topmost Kuka leaders, Babas Budh Singh and Ram Singh.

Of the two, Suba Gurcharan Singh, a Virk Jat of the village Chak Parana (Sialkot District), was an old trooper of the Khalsa Army, having to his credit, at the time of annexation of the Punjab in 1849, about 16 years' unbroken service in the Khalsa state. He had been converted to Kukaism in or about the year 1870 by Suba Jota Singh, also of the Sialkot District, and shortly afterwards appointed a Suba by Baba Ram Singh for his great interest in missionary work. After the deportation of Ram Singh "he travelled about holding Kuka meetings and making converts.[1]" After the Russians had firmly established themselves in the Central Asian regions, Gurcharan Singh was directed to contact them and to talk to them on the question of help against the British Government of India. He was peculiarly fitted

1. Foreign Department (Secret), January 1882, Cons. 558—599.



SUBA GURCHARAN SINGH

for the job : he knew Pashto and Persian ; he was fully familiar with Afghanistan and possibly also with the territories beyond, having visited Kabul several times in the past and having several disciples there as a descendant of Bhai Parana[1] ; and possessed, despite his old age, a strong physique[2] capable of undertaking long and difficult journeys, and the necessary mental equipment.

We do not know how many times and with what success he visited the Russians earlier, though there is little doubt about his having done so. The first definite information that we have at present is regarding his visit to Central Asia during the year 1879. A letter[3] from a British spy, Gulab Khan, to the British Resident at Kabul, Louis Cavagnari, mentions that Kuka Gurcharan Singh arrived from India in Katta Kurghan on Ist May 1879. He had with him "a Hindi (Gurmukhi) letter purporting to be from Ram Singh, the Kuka leader, and signed by several others." This letter "began with salams to the Russian Emperor, the Governor General and other Russian Officers and went on to say that Ram Singh was the spiritual leader of 3,15,000 Kukas, all brave soldiers; that the tyrannical British Government had imprisoned him in Rangoon, but that his younger brother at Ludhiana kept him fully au fait with what was going on : that the British were afraid of losing the Punjab by (to) the Kukas; but the sacred book (the Granth) said that Russians would go to India and the Khalsa would assist them to expel the English and then both the Russians and the Khalsa would rule over all India."

1. Bhai Parana was a disciple of Guru Nanak. He travelled all over Afghanistan, visiting Kandhar, Gazni, Kabul and Bokhara, and met with considerable proselytising success among Aroras and Sunars. At Kabul he erected a Dharamsala (rest house) which is still called after him 'Parana Sahib Ki Dharamsala.

2. His descriptive roll as given in the official records was : light complexion, large eyes, aquiline features, white beard and moustaches, height—about 5 ft. and 11 inches, age—75 years, general appearance—a fine and handsome specimen of a Sikh. Foreign Deptt. (Secret), January 1882, Cons. 558—599.

3. Foreign Department (Secret), January 1882, Cons. 558-599.

The letter was translated into Russian and forwarded to the Governor General. The latter telegraphed for Gurcharan Singh to be sent on to Samarkand. According to the afore-mentioned letter of Gulab Khan, Gurcharan Singh "was received with great honour by the Russians, and on the 12th June he received about Rs. 700/- in Russian notes and three chogas of silk. A Shikarpuri merchant called Jawala was ordered to entertain him."

A subsequent letter[1] from Gulab Khan, dated 20th January 1880, informed the British Government that on the Ist October 1879 Gurcharan Singh was again honoured by the Russians and given 2500 tangas and 7 chogas (gowns)and was told "to return to the Punjab and strengthen the friendship between the Russians and the Kukas."

There is absolutely no doubt now about the above Central Asian visit of Gurcharan Singh, since it has been entirely corroborated by the discovery of a document in the archives of the Uzbeg Socialist Soviet Republic. This document bears the title "The ambassador from the priest of the Punjab Sikhs arrives in Samarkand, 1879" and contains the letter in original carried by Gurcharan Singh to the Russian Court as well as a copy of the reply sent through him. The document was unearthed and published by the Soviet historian N.A. Khalfin in 1957 in a Russian magazine called "Sovestskoe Vostokoveadenie," No. 2. The heading of the article was "Posolstvo Baba Ram Singkha B Turkestan B 1879 godu[2]."

The document mentioned above discloses that on 9th May 1879 the citizens of Katta Kurghan, a border city of Russian Turkistan, came across an old Indian Gurcharan Singh by name. He was carrying with him a letter addressed to the Governor General of Turkistan by the chief priest and leader of the Sikhs. It was handwritten in Gurmukhi script and did not bear the signa-

1. Ibid.

2. Quoted in P.C. Roy, "Gurcharan Singh's Mission in Central Asia," Indian Historical Commission Proceedings, Part II, 1958. pp. 87-88.

੧ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਸਾਏਦੇਵਾਂਸਿਖ
ਦਾ।ਗੁਰਨਾਥਦੂਲਾਅਸਾਂਇਕਸੂਬਾਭੇਜਿਆਹੈਉਸਦੀਜਬਾਨੀਬਾ
ਤੇਂਸੁਨਲੈਣੀ।ਰਾਮਚੰਦਨਾਸਿੰਘਸੂਬੇਦਾਨਾਂਮੁਹੈ।ਗੁਰੂਗੋਬਿੰਦਸਿੰਘ
ਪਾਤਸਾਹਿਬਜੀਦਾਬਚਨਹੈ।ਜਬਬਾਰਾਂਸੈਅਠਤਾਹਿਜਰੀਸੰਮਤੁਆ
ਵੈ।ਤਬਪਤੀਤਖਾਲਸਾਪ੍ਰਗਟਹੋਵੈਗਾ।ਨੁਰੰਗਜੇਬਨਾਲਬਚਨਹੋਏ
ਆਹੈ।ਇਹਗ[illegible]ਸ।ਦੁਖਦੇਵੈਗਾ।ਨਾਮਧਾਰੀਆਂਨੂੰਤਬਅਸੀਂਆਵੈ
ਗਾਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜਨੂੰ।ਕਰੈਗਾ।ਅਸੂਸਬਾਣਦੂਕੀਜੀਤਹੋਵੈਗੀ।ਗੁ
ਰੂਬਾਬੇਨਾਨਕਸਾਹਿਬਜੀਦਾਬਚਨਹੈਮੈਅਵਤਾਰਧਾਰਾਂਗਾਇਕ
[illegible] ਜ ਤਸਤੇਆਵੈ।ਕਰੈਗੁਪਤਬਹੁਤੂੰਧਮਚਾਵੈ।ਸੇਸਨਾਗ
ਹਿਅੰਤਕੋਪਾਵੈ।ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾਬੇਦਨਾਅੰਤਨਹੀਪਾਇਓ।ਨੇਤਨੇਤ
ਕਰਮੁਖੋਅਲਾਵੈ।ਸਪਤਦੀਪਕੇਰਾਜੇਜਾਨੇ।ਕਹਨਲਾਗਤਦੇ
ਕਨੁਆਨੇ।ਰਕਤਭਾਜੀਅਤਿਕਾਮਨੇਵਿਚਪਸੇਰ।ਖੰਡਾ
ਘੋੜਾਅਦੋਜੇਫੂਫਰਗੇਸਭਠੋਗ।ਲੋਹਗਸਹਰਕਲਬਹੁਸੀਜੇਗਾ।
ਰਕਤਭਾਜੀਅਤਿਬਹੋਸੀਤੇਗਾ।ਰੋਜਰਪਈਜਾਨੈਕਰਗਾਬਨਾ
ਆਵੈ।ਗੁਰੂਨਾਨਕਸਾਹਿਬਜੀਦਾਹੁਕਮਹੈਨਾਥਜੀਆਵੈਗਾ
ਤਿਸਕੀਜੀਤਹੋਵੈਗੀ।ਤੈਲਖਅੰਦੂਜਾਰ ੩੧੫੦੦੦ ਸਿਖ
ਅਸਾਡੇਦੂਜਹੈਨਹੋਰਕਾਕੀਤੀਜਾਦੇਹਾਂ।ਪੰਜਾਬਉਜੜੇਗਾ
ਸਹਿਰਸੜੇਗੇ।ਅਠਜਪਹੇਦੀਨੇਗੇ।ਚੋਤੀਬੂਸਅੰਗਰੇ
ਜਰਹੈਗਾਹਿੰਦਾਬਿਚ।ਦੋਵੇਂਬਾਰੀਰਖਿਦੇਹੈਨ।ਉਤਰਾਨਾ
ਬਪੀਤਨਪੁਰਤੇਆਵੈਗਾ।ਹੋਰਪੰਜਾਬਦੀਵਿਚਦਾਵਣੀਆ
ਸਭਖਾਲੀਪਈਆਹੈਨ।ਅਨਾਂਸੰਪਾਦੇਕਾਦੀਤਾਹੈਅਸ
ਚਖੰਪਹਲਾਕੀਤੀਹੈ।ਇਕਸੂਬਾਸੰਸਿਘਬੇਗੁਸਾਹਿਏ

ਏਹੈਨੁਭਜਨਬੰਦਗੀਵਾਲਾਉਨਾਅਠਾਖੀਸਵਾਇਤੋਪਅਰੇ,
ਰਾਏਹੈਨਾ। ਤੁਸਾਨੂਹੁਕਮਬਾਬੇਗੁਰੂਨਾਨਕਸਾਹਿਬਜੀਦਾ·
ਜੋਅਸਾਡੀਗਛਿਆਕਰੋ। ੩੧੫੦੦੦ ਤ੍ਰੈਲਖਪੰਦ੍ਰਾਹਜਾਰ
ਸਿੰਘਤੁਸਾਡੀਹਮਰਾਹਵਾਸਤੈਤਿਆਰਹੈਨਹੋਰਭੀਜਮਾਕੀਤੀ
ਜਾਏਗਾ। ਜਿਸਵਖਤਆਵੇਗੁਚਾਹੋਉਸੀਵਖਤਹਾਜਰਹੈਨ।
ਹੋਰਜੀਸਬਸਿੰਘਾਨੇਅਰਜਕੀਤੀਸੀਗੁਰੂਦਸਮੇਪਾਤਸਾਹਗੁ
ਰੂਗੋਬਿੰਦਸਿੰਘਸਾਹਿਬਜੀਦੇਆਸਜੋਕਿਥੈਕਿਥੈਅਠਾਰਾਪ
ਹੋਈਕੋ। ਤਬਗੁਰਕਾਬਚਨਹੋਇਆ। ੧ਰੂਸਕਾਬੁਲਦੇ
[illegible]ਦਿਚਾ। ੧ਕਾਬਲਦਿਚਾ। ੧ਜੰਮੇਦਾਦਿਚਾ। ੧ਪਸਿ[illegible]
ਦਿਚਾ। ੧ਜੰਮੂਦਿਚਾ। ੧ਲਾਹੌਰਦਿਚਾ। ੧ਪੇਜਪੁਰਦਿਚਾ। ੧
[illegible]ਦਿਚਾ। ਹੋਰਜੀਮੁਲਕ[illegible]ਬਾਰਬਾਦਬਾਬੁਪਾਸੇਪੁ
ਰੈਹੀਹਿਰਮਾਦੇਹੈਨਾ। ੩੫ ਪੈਰੀਸੁਹੇਸਿਕਏਆਗੈਕੰਮਦੇ
ਵਣਿਵਾਲੇਹੈਨਾ।

Photostat copy of a letter of Baba Ram Singh to Russia
courtesy : U.S.S.R. Embassy, New Delhi.

ture of the sender. On hearing this Major General N.A. Ivanov, the principal officer of the Jeravshansk circle, expressed a desire to the officials at Katta Kurghan to meet Gurcharan Singh personally at Samarkand. The Indian visitor went to have a meeting with Ivanov, but to communicate the import of the letter to the Russian official was no easy job. Fortunately, among the Indian merchants there was a person who knew both Persian and Gurmukhi. He translated the letter into Persian. Then from Persian it was rendered into Russian without any difficulty. In translation the letter begins as follows:[1]

"Baba Ram Singh, the Guru of chaste people, is writing fondly to the Rûssian Lord: I am sending my companion in arms (a provincial chief) from whom you will come to know everything. His name is Gurcharan Singh. Guru Gobind Singh predicted that Sant Khalsa would emerge in 1238. We should then be free from Aurangzeb, but the English would suddenly begin to tyrannise over us. Then a band of people called Russians would come and drive out the English. The Russian hero would win."

This is followed by an account of certain predictions supposed to be from Gurus Nanak and Gobind Singh. For instance it is stated : "The prophecy of Guru Baba Nanak Sahib affirms : "You must protect us. 315,000 Sikhs will be under your command. Others also can be pressed into service. When you will arrive, we shall be prepared, as you desire." Speaking about Guru Gobind Singh: "When Guru Gobind Singh was asked where the aforesaid battle would be fought, the Guru replied : "First in the hills of Kabul, secondly in Kabul itself, thirdly in Jamrud, fourthly in Peshawar, fifthly in Jammu, sixthly in Lahore, seventhly in Phirozpur, eighthly in Ludhiana." The whole letter is written in that vein.

1. Ibid.

The arrival of a messenger from distant India with an inviting letter aroused great interest among the Russian administrators in Turkistan. N.I. Korolkov, assistant to the Chief of Jeravshansk circle, had a long discussion with Gurcharan Singh. After this talk Korolkov wrote a note in which he said[1]: "Gurcharan Singh unhesitatingly believes that irrespective of the religious creed every one now serving under the British in India will join the Russians as soon as they will arrive in India. This belief is fortified by what the saint predicted long before the advent of the Feringhis (Englishmen) in the Punjab."

This note from Korolkov further informs that Gurcharan Singh believed, in common with other Indians, that Russia had no intention to rule over India. Their move towards India was motivated by a desire to cross swords with the English who remained beyond their reach in an island home in Europe, surrounded by water on all sides. It was also believed that after inflicting a defeat on the English the Russians would transfer the administration of the Punjab to the hands of Dalip Singh, the offspring of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the creator of the Punjab.

Subsequently, Ivanov, the Major General, had a talk with Gurcharan Singh who impressed him most as a patriot representing the wounded pride and suffering of the Indians in bondage. Gurcharan Singh's unquestioning faith in Russian capacity to strike the British hard appeared to him also to have an unmistakable ring of sincerity[2]. Ivanov forwarded the letter of Baba Ram Singh together with the notes on the discussion with Gurcharan Singh to K.P. Kaufmann, the Governor General of Turkistan. Before coming to any decision, Kaufmann wanted to know precisely the political condition of the Punjab and sought the opinion of I.P. Minaev, a great Russian specialist on Indian affairs at that time. Minaev in a brief communication gave an

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.

account of the Kuka sect, the rising of the Kukas, their suppression by the British rulers and the consequences flowing from the fact of ruthless suppression. In his opinion there was nothing unnatural in Baba Ram Singh's sending a person to enlist Russian support in the liberation movement launched by the Kukas. He pointed out, however, that Baba Nanak, the first Sikh prophet, lived in the 15th century and could not be the author of the prediction concerning the arrival of the Russians. It was of contemporaneous origin and was attributed to him to serve the need of the hour. General Kaufmann, however, decided to proceed with caution. But a letter was given to the Kuka leader, which reads[1]:

"Greetings from the Commander-in-Chief and Governor General to Baba Ram Singh and Baba Budh Singh. The letter was duly received from Gurcharan Singh, careful consideration was given to it, and the contents were gratifying to note. Thanks for the informative communication, but it is desirable to have details, more fresh news about the affairs and situation in India. The prophecy of Guru Govind Singh and Guru Baba Nanak was noted for information. Everything will happen according to the Will of God. The prophets know best when the hour will strike."

Having got the above letter, Gurcharan Singh returned to Tash Kurghan on the way home. From here on 4th December 1879 he sent a letter by the hand of one Hindu Maya informing the Russians about the march of a British force from Kabul towards Balkh. Maya was thankfully rewarded with 500 tangas and one choga.

While making a statement later on before the Commissioner of Peshawar, the spy Gulab Khan mentioned that "on the 9th April 1880 Gurcharan Singh sent another letter to Samarkand by Narain Das of Hazru in the Rawalpindi District. This was from Baba Ram Singh,

1. Ibid.

but in the handwriting of his younger brother." It stated that "Gurcharan Singh had been deputed secretly to the General, but that this secret had become known throughout India, so Gurcharan Singh could not return[1]."

When Gurcharan Singh returned to Peshawar in 1880 and was staying temporarily in the sarai under the fort, Gulab Khan, the British spy, met him and won his confidence by saying that he was a brother of Sayad Khan who was in the Russian service in Central Asia at that time. "On my assuring him that I was on the point of going back to Katta Kurghan," said Gulab Khan in a statement to Mr. C. Brown," "he gave me two letters[2] for the Russian Officers, which I made ever to the Commissioner of Peshawar." The letter to Sayad Khan was to the effect that "the people of Burmah had become the 'murids' (disciples) of Ram Singh and were in rebellion and that in consequence the British had been obliged to withdraw their troops from Kabul." The second letter was addressed to General Kaufmann and was to the effect that "certain Shikarpuris had treated him very badly and had given information against him and Gulab Khan and further acted as spies for Gulab Singh (a code word for the British Government); that when King's army came to the Punjab, the Khalsa would assist them, that the Baba (Ram Singh) had foretold that a Musalman would come from the west and defeat the Topiwala (hatwearers) and the Musalman was no doubt Abdur Rehman." On the basis of this prophecy, the General was asked in the letter "to consider all the Kuka sayings as true." The letter was concluded with the promise that "he would give the letter from the Russians to Baba Sahib and obtain a reply."

The spy Gulab Khan wanted Gurcharan Singh to be apprehended and searched before he left Peshawar. He later on submitted a note[3] to the Government greatly

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

regretting that "the English Government did not order the apprehension of this man." "He had with him, as he told me himself," said Gulab Khan, "a letter in the handwriting of the Russian Emperor addressed to Baba Ram Singh. He had also some addresses from the Russians, together with some presents and letters for Baba Ram Singh. The letters contained directions as to what addresses he should write."

From Peshawar Suba Gurcharan Singh reached Bhaini Sahib by a zigzag route and delivered the Russian letter with the accompanying presents to Baba Budh Singh for onward transmission to Baba Ram Singh. He met him secretly at night. An account of what transpired at the meeting was later on given by Gurcharan Singh himself to Gulab Khan, when the two were confined together for a night in a cell[1]. While narrating the story he said that with the Russian parwana he gave Baba Budh Singh "a likeness of the Czar in which one ear appeared to hang over." He also showed him a second copy of the same, which he said he would give to the Maharaja of Kashmir. Also, he gave the Baba a number of papers "among which were some maps of Turkistan, particulars regarding the Russian army and letters from Hindus of Samarkand, Tash Kurghan etc." All these papers were soon burnt as a measure of precaution. Gurcharan Singh was advised not to deliver the letters to anybody of India, because it was dangerous, and to proceed immediately to Kabul and join Jassa Ram of Patiala and three others (one Hindu and two Muslims) at the residence of Mangal Singh of Hazru. These people were carrying, the Baba said, "letters in reply to those" he (Gurcharan Singh) "had sent him earlier by the hands of Dial Singh and Arur Singh. At the same time, Baba Budh Singh told[2] Gurcharan Singh that all the papers

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. "Some days after the particulars of Gulab Khan's interview with Gurcharan Singh had been recorded, a report was received from Burmah that the guard at Margui had arrested Mian Singh, son of Sham Singh of Sarhali, in the enclosure occupied by Guru Ram Singh."

including a portrait of the Czar brought by Dial Singh and Arur Singh had been forwarded to Guru Ram Singh through one Sham Singh of Sarhali, carefully concealed behind a looking glass.

After the visit of Bhaini Sahib when Gurcharan Singh reached his village Chak Parana (or Chak Ram Das), he was suddenly apprehended by the Government on the secret reports of Gulab Khan and detained in the judicial lock-up at Lahore for interrogation. It was at this time that a ruse was played on him by arresting Gulab Khan and putting him in the same cell with him for a night. Not knowing that his partner was his worst enemy, he divulged some of his secrets to him. He told him frankly about all his movements since he had left Peshawar and his secret meeting at Bhaini with Baba Budh Singh, which we have already noticed. He also gave out that after being released he would "go to Jammu and obtain from the Maharaja letter to the Russians, which with Budh Singh's reply he would take to Kabul and give to Sayad Khan[1]." All that he said was treacherously reported to the Government by Gulab Khan.

After this a confidential report was prepared on him by the Punjab Government, which after recounting his undesirable activities said[2] : "Gurcharan Singh is certainly hostile to the British Government. Though an old man, he is physically very strong and capable of undergoing great fatigue. He is remarkably erect and is a very good specimen of a Sikh soldier....Mentally, he is quite equal to carrying on a political intrigue....If he is allowed to remain at large, he will lose no opportunities of recounting the honours conferred on him by the Russians and of enlarging on the benefits to be reaped by the Kukas in the event of the Russians obtaining possession of the Punjab."

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.

This report was forwarded to the Government of India on 5th April 1881. With it was sent a letter conveying the official view as follows[1] :— "Communications have been addressed to you from time to time regarding the proceedings of one Gurcharan Singh, son of Attar Singh, Virk Jat, of Chak Parana in the Sialkot District, who has been for many years in the habit of visiting Central Asia and has been suspected of conveying intelligence from the Russian authorities in Central Asia to members of the Kuka sect. Gurcharan Singh has recently returned to the Punjab from one of his journeys and upon information received in the Secret Department has been arrested and is now in detention at Lahore. From a perusal of all the facts which have been collected regarding Gurcharan Singh, the Lieut. Governor has arrived at the conclusion that it is not expedient that he should remain at liberty, as he will certainly continue to act in the future as the medium of communication between the Russian authorities in Central Asia and the disaffected Kukas. Sir Robert Egerton thinks that this account will establish beyond a doubt that the suspicions regarding him, which have been entertained by this Government, are well founded. Under these circumstances His Honor the Lieut. Governor would recommend that under the provisions of Regulation III of 1818 a warrant should be issued for the detention of Gurcharan Singh during the pleasure of His Excellency the Governor General in Council. Sir Robert Egerton does not think that the time of detention need necessarily be long, but it should be long enough to sever Gurcharan Singh's connection with the Kukas and to interrupt the intrigues in Central Asia indicated by these papers."

The recommendation of the Punjab Government was approved by the Supreme Government and a warrant was issued under Regulation III of 1818 with the specific instruction of the Governor General that unless he was

1. Ibid.

"likely to excite Kukas to some violent manifestation[1]," he should better be placed under surveillance at his own village or some other suitable place. The Punjab Government, after some careful thought, decided to detain him at Multan. No trial was held, because nothing could be proved against him in a regular court by the due process of law. Gurcharan Singh was not released till 1886.

Before we proceed further, it may be worthwhile to refer to a few notings of the members of the Central Government. The secretary to the Governor General took an extreme view and recommended detention for life. He wrote[2]: "I think there can be very little doubt that Gurcharan Singh has been mixed up in the intrigues of which he is accused, and that he has succeeded in conveying communications between the Russians and Ram Singh at Mergui.... To talk of severing Gurcharan Singh's connection with the Kukas seems to be useless. He is a Kuka Subah and will remain so till he dies, doing meanwhile all the harm he can to us, so that we shall have to keep him in prison for the rest of his life, if we mean to disable him. But I see no other way out of it." The Governor General's note was moderate and balanced. He did not think[3] that they "need be troubled about the effect of Gurcharan Singh's manoeuvres upon the Russians, who are not likely to be much moved by these wandering intriguers." But he admitted that "the effect upon the Kukas of any wild ideas that the Russians may aid them is more important."

A reference was made a little earlier to a secret meeting of Suba Gurcharan Singh with Baba Budh Singh. Some idea of Baba Budh Singh's interest in the efforts for Russian aid will have been gained from that. This matter may be further illuminated by mentioning a few

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ।

ਉਪਰੰਤਅਬਾਵਾਬੁਧਸਿੰਘੁਕ੍ਰਪਾਤੁ [illegible] ਤਾਂਨਚੋਗੋਬਰਨਾਥਜੀਦੇ
ਵਾਸਤੇਤੁਬਾਹੇਰਸਿਅਰਕੈਦਵਲੇਜਗੈਲਹੀਵਾਨੇਰਠਜੀਨੂ
ਨੂਅਗੇਵੈਜੋਚਿਠੀਤੁਸਾਂਸਤੇਗੁਰਬਾਵਾਰਾਮਸਿੰਘਜੀਦੇ
ਵਾਸਤੇਨਾਲਆਪਣੀਆਂਸੂਰਤਾਂਦੇਸੁਚੋਗੁਰਚਰਨਸਿੰਘ
ਦੇਹਥਭੇਜੀ [illegible] ਲੀਤਕ੍ਰਾਪੂਖਸ਼ਾਂ [illegible] ਨਾਲਸਾਨੂੰਪ
[illegible] ਤੀਆਹੈਜੀਚਿਠੀਨੂੰਪੜਕੈ [illegible] ਅਨੰਦ [illegible]
ਤਪ੍ਰਸੰਨਹੋਏਹਾਂਜੀ [illegible] ਗੁਰਚ
ਰਨਸਿੰਘਦੇਆਵਣਦੀਬਾਰਤਾਸੁਣ [illegible] ਪੰਥਦਾ
ਲੇਆਸੂਾਂਵਿਆਹੋਰਸਿੰਘਾਂਕੂ [illegible] ਨੂੰਖੁਸ਼ੀਦੀਖਬਰਸੁ
ਣਾਈਸਭਖੁਸ਼ਹੋਏਹੈਨਇਹਬਾਰਤਾਸੁਣਕੇਸਭਨਾਂਨੇਸਾਨੂੰਹੇ
ਸਲਾਹਾਂਦਿਤੀਕੇਜੋਜੀਚਿਠੀਗੁਰਚਰਨਸਿੰਘਲੈਆਇਆਹੈ
ਸੋਸਤਿਗੁਰਬਾਰਵੀਂਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਰਾਮਸਿੰਘਜੀ [illegible]
ਹੋਰਆਪਣੀਤਰਫੋਂ [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] ਆਪਣੇਪੰਥਦੇਨੂੰਕੇਖਾਲਸਾ [illegible]

ਜੇਤਤਿਆਰਹਾਂਤੁਸੀਆਕਰਮੁਖਦਿਖਾਵੋਂਤੋਸਤਿਗੁਰਦੀਕ੍ਰਿ
ਪਾਨਾਲਇਨਾਮਲੇਛਫਰੰਗੜਿਆਨੂਇਕਪਲਵਿਚਮਾਰਾਂਗੇ।।
ਤੁਸਾਡਾਆਵਣਾਬਣਦਾਹੈਕਿਉਂਕੇਗੁਰੂਦਸਮਾਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹਗੁਰੂ
ਗੋਬਿੰਦਸਿੰਘਜੂਸਾਹਿਬਜੀਦਾਹੁਕਮਹੈਤੁਸਾਂ[illegible]ਕਰੋਗੇ।
ਦੋਹਿਰਾ।। ਪਾਤੇਸਾਲਸ਼ੂਹਾਵਣਾਗੇਂਗਾਬਰਸਿੰਘਤ[illegible]ਜਾ।। ਗੁਰੂ
ਦੈਜੰਮਨਾਮਲੈਗਏਭੁਜੰਗੀਦਾਸਾ।। ਹੋਰਗੁਰੂਗੋਬਿੰਦਸਿੰਘਸਾਹਿ
ਬਜੀਦਾਬਚਨਹੈ।। ਸਵੈਯਾ।। ਪਾ ਪਾ [illegible]ਹਾਬਿਨਾਸਨਕੇਕ[illegible]ਗੀ
ਅਵਤਾਰਕਹਾਵੈਂਗੇ।। ਤੁਰਕਛਤ੍ਰਰੰਗਸੋਪਛਾੜ[illegible]ਤੇਰਕਾਢਕਿਰ
ਪਾਂਣਕਮਾਵੈਂਗੇ।। ਇਕਸੋਇਕਹੀਰਪ੍ਰਬਲਤਤਬਸੇਰਵਿਡ
ਲਜਪਾਵੈਂਗੇ।। ਭਲਭਾਗਭਈਜਾਏਹਸੰਭਲਕੈਹਰਿਜੂਹਰਿ
ਮੰਦਰਆਵੈਂਗੇ।। ਦੋਹਿਰਾ।। ਗੁਰਨਾਨਕਤੇਆਦਲੈਗੁਰੂਤੇਜੇਹਿ
।। ਸੋਤੁਮਰੀਰਛਿਆਕਰੈਂਜਿਨਪਨਨਾਲਾਗੇਕੋਇ।। ਹੋਰਕੋਈਗਲਦਾ
ਫਿਕਰਨਹੀਕਰਨਾਗੁਰਾਂਦੀਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨਾਲਕੁਝ [illegible]ਬਾਦਿਨਾਦਿਨਵਧ
ਦਾਜਾਂਦਾਹੈ।। ਹੋਰਜੀਰਾਜਾਪਹਾੜਦੇਲੁਭੀਆਸਾਡਾਆਂਦਾਹੈ।।
ਹੋਰਭੀਸਭਲੋਕਾਂਇਸਮਲੇਛਾਂਥੀਂਥਕੇਹੋਏਨਾਇਸੀਵਾਸਤੇਆਪਕੋਤ
ਰਫੇਇਸਜਾਸਗਾਂਨੂੰਭੇਜਿਆਹੈਆਦਮੀਬੁਧਸਿੰਘਹੈਜੋਕੁਝਪਰ
ਸੋਤੁਸਦਾਜਬਾਬਦੇਸੀਜੋਗਲਤੁਸੀਕਹੋਗੇਤੇਜਾਸੋਸੋਉਸਨੂੰਸਮਝ
ਕੇਕੰਮਕੀਤਾਜਾਸੀ।। ਹੋਰਜੀ[illegible]ਆਂਸਾਡੀਇਹਹੈਜੋਸਭਫੌਜਾਂਦੀਆਂਦੁ
ਤੇਲਾਲਸਿੰਘ।। ਦਸਤਖਤਬੁਧਸਿੰਘਬਾਬਾਜੀਦੇ ੧੯੩੯੪੭
੧ ਪੂਸੁਦੀ ।।

Photostat copy of a letter of Baba Budh Singh to Russia
courtesy: National Archives, India

more facts. The first is the reference in Gulab Khan's diary to his meeting with Baba Budh Singh at Bhaini, reading as[1] : "The next day (3rd January 1881) I met Budh Singh in the jungle. He was very polite to me, offered me money and clothes and said that he and his whole sect were anxiously awaiting the time when the Russians would cross Oxus, as then numbers of Kukas would flock to their standard." Another notable fact is the message brought by Arur Singh (a member of Suba Gurcharan Singh's family at his village) on 18th January 1881 from Baba Budh Singh for the British spy Gulab Khan mistaken then for a friend. The message conveyed that the Baba "had now no letter for the Russians, having already despatched the reply to the one he had received by Gurcharan Singh and that the bearer of the reply must have already reached Kabul." Gulab Khan was required through the messenger "to go to Kabul and find out Mangal Singh of Hazru and remain with him until the spring, when, if Gurcharan Singh was released, he and two others would be sent to the Russians with letters and presents"; but if he preferred going on to Samarkand, he could do so, "as his messengers would find their way themselves and would reach there by the beginning of June." The message ended with compliments for the eminent Russian authorities.

In 1883 two letters of the year 1880 were intercepted by the Government, one purporting to be from Baba Budh Singh to the Russian Governor of Turkistan and General Ivanoff and the other from the Russian Governor of Katta Kurghan to Baba Budh Singh and Jassa Ram[2]. The letters were found on the person of one Shankar Rai who used to act occasionally as an emissary of the Kukas with regard to the Russians. The first letter was in Gurmukhi. It delightfully acknowledged the receipt of the Russian Governor's letter for Ram Singh sent by the

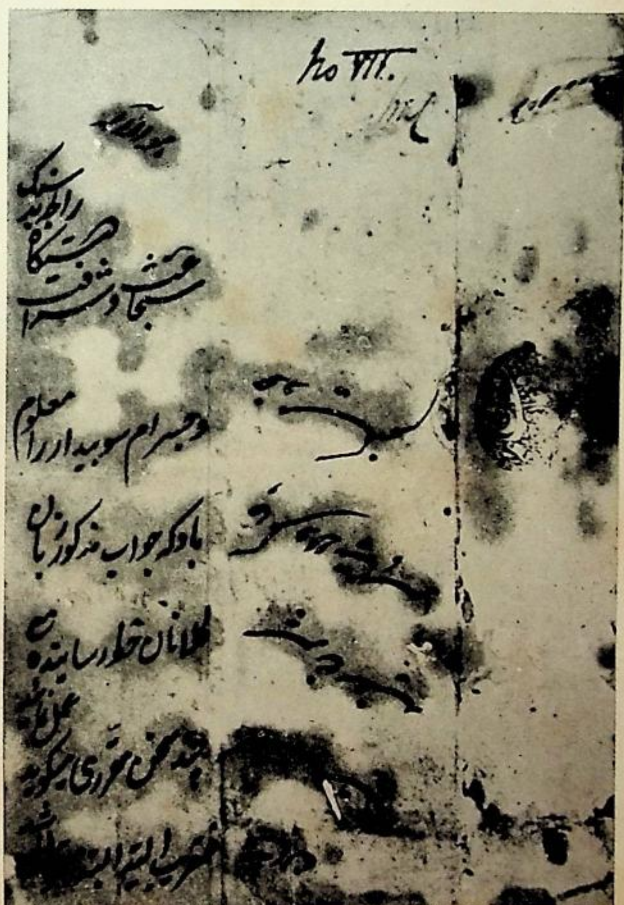
1. Ibid.
2. Foreign Department (Secret-E), Cons. January 1884, Nos. 40-95.

hand of Suba Gurcharan Singh and then said: "The happy news of the arrival of your letter and of its bearer, Gurcharan Singh, was communicated to the Subas and other Kukas and they have received the tidings with much pleasure. We have been advised by them to send your letter on to the true Guru and 12th King, Ram Singh and to send an intelligent man to you with a letter to the following effect. We are not in need of your money or arms and ammunition. By the grace of the true Guru, we have all stores in readiness. Come here and show yourselves. Then by the grace of the true Guru we will destroy the Malesh Farangis in a moment." There was, besides, a mention of some alleged prophecies of Guru Gobind Singh to prove that the coming of the Russians to India was something inevitable. At the end of the letter there was an assurance that the Russians would face no difficulty, if they chose to come to India. They were told: "Do not let anxiety prey on your mind. By the grace of the Guru the Kukas are increasing every day. The hill Raja is our friend. All people are disaffected to the Malesh." Sufaid Singh and Lal Singh were suggested as code names to be used in future correspondence.

The second letter was in Persian and bore the seal of the Russian Governor of Katta Kurghan. It mentioned that the bearer of the letter would "deliver the answer of those in higher authority to the communications" of "the powerful, noble and mighty Raja Budh Singh and Subedar Jassa Ram" and requested a prompt compliance with the message delivered.

Both these letters were closely examined by the Punjab Government. No definite conclusion was arrived at as to their authenticity. Sir Charles Aitchison did not attach much importance to them and thought that "it is quite possible that the communications of Said Khan and Gulab Khan may be mere attempts to get money[1]." Even

1. Ibid. Punjab Government to Government of India, dated 30th May 1883.



No VIII.

Photostat copy of a letter in Persian from Russia to Raja (Baba) Budh Singh - courtesy : National Archives, India.

so, the Lieut. Governor held that although the matter was "not free from considerable doubt, it was probable that the papers found on Shankar Rai might be "genuine documents[1]" for two reasons : (i) according to Said Khan the seal was genuine; (ii) Shankar Rai had often in the past acted as "the bearer of secret communications between the Russian authorities and the Kuka leaders." But because the matter was not definite, no action was thought necessary or recommended against the Kukas on the basis of these letters. The Central Government was told that the Lieut. Governor believed that "no serious harm can result from the occasional interchange of such enigmatical compliments as are contained in the communications[2]."

The detention of Suba Gurcharan Singh in 1881 and the interception of the above letters, though serious blows to their secret negotiations with the Russians, do not seem to have damped the enthusiasm of the Kuka leaders. The work was pursued as vigorously as before. The man, who lent vitality and continuity to it, was Suba Bishen Singh, a Kuka of great missionary zeal. A wealthy Arora businessman having agencies in Peshawar, Kabul, Bokhara and Russian territory, he had very easy opportunities of building up relations with the Russian authorities of Central Asia and acting as the medium of communication between them and Baba Budh Singh. The official account of Suba Bishen Singh shows that Baba Ram Singh before his deportation "had impressed upon his followers the necessity of conspiring with Russia at all hazards" and had commissioned him for this purpose.[3] For the period 1880 to 1888 there are numerous references to Suba Bishen Singh and his activities in the Government records in the Secret Department, but as to his proceedings prior to 1880 the records are silent. This shows that he was then either not active or not

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Foreign Department (Secret-F), August 1889, Cons. 114-115.

watched by the Government. Probably, it was the growing estrangement between Russia and Great Britain, the mounting Afghan crisis and the influence of Suba Gurcharan Singh, which activised him and brought him into the limelight.

One other factor also may have made a mark upon his mind. This was the prediction, based on the sakhis (prophecies) recovered in 1876 from the Badh Tirath Tank at Haripur in the Sirsa District, that Bishen Singh would "lead a Muhammadan army across the North-West Frontier into the Punjab[1]." But once his enthusiasm was aroused, Bishen Singh, it seems, spared no efforts to pursue his plans to success. He was not a mere emissary like Suba Gurcharan Singh. He built up a corps out of the Kukas who gradually joined him in small batches, so that in 1884 the District Superintendent of Police, Gurdaspur, was able to report [2] : "It is said that Suba Bishen Singh has 300 followers with him and twice a week visits the ruler of Bokhara, who is a creature of the Russian Government." A few years later on the 2nd June 1888 the District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, informed "that Suba Bishen Singh in the Russian service was said to have command of several regiments, and that some of the Kukas with him hold high appointments.[3]" This indicates that Bishen Singh, after he had assembled a sufficient number of the Kukas in Central Asia, entered the military service of Russia. This fact, however, needs to be corroborated from Russian sources before it can be finally accepted.

Among the many communications that Suba Bishen Singh is supposed to have sent to India, one was in 1883 to the effect that "the Russians were making warlike preparations and intended to invade India in Sambat 1941 (A.D. 1884-85)[4]." According to the report, dated

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

8th September 1883, of the District Superintendent, Police, Ludhiana, this information was obtained from Hira Singh who was a cousin of Suba Bishen Singh.

With the arrival of Maharaja Dalip Singh in Russia in 1887, the situation took a dramatic turn. The official papers on Suba Bishen Singh would have us believe that when the Maharaja came to Russia, he made a common cause with him and the two together engaged themselves in efforts to arrange for Russian assistance in order to invade the Punjab[1]. The matter was first reported to India in 1886 and hot rumours of the possibility of an attack were current throughout the year 1887.

In 1887 Suba Gurcharan Singh once again thought of proceeding to Russia. He was then an old man of 80 years. There were also restrictions on his movements, because he had been released in 1886 on the condition that he would not leave his home district. But neither the age nor the government restrictions could suppress the Kukaism in him. Regardless of the consequences that might follow from an act of defiance of authority, he became ready to slip away from India and join Maharaja Dalip Singh and Bishen Singh. But before he could do anything, the matter was secretly reported to the Government. An instruction was immediately issued to the district authorities of Sialkot to prevent his doing so by any means[2]. Again in 1889 a d.o. letter was written to the same effect by one Mr. Cunningham of the Central Government to one Mr. C.L. Tupper of the Punjab Government. The Central Government was informed in reply in a similar demi-official manner that the District Superintendent of Police, Sialkot, had been directed to "prevent any attempt on the part of Gurcharan Singh to leave the Punjab[3]."

1. Ibid.
2. For. Deptt. (Secret-F), Cons. August 1889, Nos. 114-115.
3. Ibid.

Chapter VIII

SIGNS OF ANOTHER STORM

FROM 1876 onward the Kukas were in a state of great excitement. "If the Kuka sect is not suppressed," wrote Attar Singh of Bhadaur in 1876, "its doctrines will spread and lead to outbreaks far more violent and serious than the last.[1]" This was not only because of the fast approaching Anglo-Afghan hostilities, though that fact no doubt had an immense effect, but also for the reason of the extensive currency acquired by certain prophecies, particularly that of Sohava. The deep impression made by the sakhi (prophecy) of Sohava on the minds of the Kukas has been described by Attar Singh as follows[2].

> "At Sohava a large peepul has already overspread a jund and is enveloping it more and more completely everyday. The time is therefore drawing near, and of this the Kukas feel so sure that they often go to Sohava to watch the progress of the peepul. 'Alas !' they exclaim looking at the trees, 'the peepul has not yet fully covered the jund. Hira Singh and others disobeyed our Guru in being too precipitate, and brought all this misery upon us. But our Guru is infallible. When the peepul covers the jund, he will return to India and conquer it."

In 1876 a pothi of sakhis (book of prophecies) was announced to have been discovered from the Paihlad Sagar or Badh Tirath Tank at Haripur in the Sirsa

1. Attar Singh, *Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh*. Introduction (vi).

2. Ibid.

District[1]. The pothi, said to contain several prophecies of Guru Gobind Singh, was most probably a fabrication[2] of some ingenious mind. But this hardly mattered, for the sakhis were implicitly believed by the Kukas. Moreover, even as an act of deliberate fabrication, it may provide an excellent glimpse of the Kukas' psychology at the time, as also of their great passion for freedom or disaffection to British rule. The sakhis pointed to an early return of Baba Ram Singh from the exile, to the rise of a Muhammadan chief on the north-west of India, to a Russian invasion of the Punjab with Suba Bishen Singh in command and expulsion of the English from the country. The impulse for the production and circulation of the sakhis, it may be said, was provided by some letters of Baba Ram Singh containing mention of some predictions. In illustration of this may be given a few extracts from one of his letters intercepted in 1878[3]:

"It is the Guru's order that in the beginning of the 34th year (3rd April 1878 corresponding with 1st Chet 1935) disturbances will commence and revolutions will take place in the different countries. Consider, O Khalsa ! that disturbances have commenced in the 34th year (Russian and Turkish War). Henceforth, all that has been predicted by the Sacha Padshah Kalghiwala (Guru Gobind Singh) will be fulfilled; rest assured of this. It is not necessary to write at length; you can understand for yourselves. All else predicted has reference to the ruin and destruction of the rulers: the signs of the times dating from the 34th year. Briefly, all the sayings will be fulfilled. I always said that if anything transpired in 34, then all would come to pass.

"O brother Dya Singh (false name for Baba Budh

1. Foreign Department (Secret-F), Cons. August 1889, Nos. 114-115; Home Judicial (B), August 1882, Progs. 217-18.

2. According to S. Attar Singh of Bhadaur these sakhis were invented by Waryam Singh Kuka, of Kanh Singhwala. Ibid.

3. Home Judicial, October 1881, Progs. Nos. 188-195. The letter was brought from Rangun by Kuka Naina Singh in 1877.

Singh)[1]! that time has arrived, the time alluded to above. The Guru is omnipotent; his works are best known to him. Rulers and subjects will all be ground to powder like flour; if not like flour, most certainly like dalia (crushed grain). For the protection of Sant Khalsa, a Muhammadan will appear from the West and collect all and eradicate the Malaichh Panth (the English)."

Regarding the return of Baba Ram Singh to the Punjab, one letter mentioned that he would return "at the sabz sohri, the whisking of the broom (intended to mean the destruction of the Government)," while another said : "Now the prophecy of my return to the native country is to be fulfilled. I have to join my congregations after 6¼ years[2]."

All these remarks of Ram Singh raised great expectations in the minds of his devotees. They started preparing to strike again and actually enquired from their leader as to "where in case of a disturbance they should strike[3]." The reply of Baba Ram Singh was that "in case of a disturbance all should combine and after mature consideration strike in the most befitting place."

That the Kukas were in a mood of excitement and were determined to have tryst with destiny again, is revealed in a d.o. letter[4] from Mr. Warburton, District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, to Col. H. N. Miller, Inspector General, Police, Punjab, dated Ludhiana 31st August 1878. Warburton wrote : "I think it my duty to point out that the Kukas are a source of political danger. Although at present they are comparatively few in numbers, I believe they are increasing, as proselytism is actively progressing. Ever since permission has been given for ten Kukas to visit Budh Singh at a time, Kukas from all parts come to Bhaini and put up

1. Hari Singh was another name used for Baba Budh Singh by Baba Ram Singh in his letters.

2. Home Judicial, October 1881. Progs. Nos. 188-195.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

in the neighbourhood and outside of Bhaini. At nights, meetings presided over by Budh Singh are occasionally held at a sort of shrine near the village of Lallen, in Patiala territory. Their system of disseminating news or instructions rapidly is perfect." Sounding a note of warning he added : "In the event of difficulties or should we sustain any reverses hereafter in any war, these Kukas are certain to show their teeth. Our policy should be to disable them from now by every legitimate means and render them completely incapable of doing mischief. If we were to lose ground and the Kukas were to rise, I am certain a large portion of ignorant agriculturists and nearly all the ill-disposed, believing in the prophetic sayings of Ram Singh, would join the sect."

As to the remedy, Warburton recommended: "I am in hopes of securing further documentary evidence of Ram Singh's seditious teachings, who, I think, with all those who have participated in the offence, should be tried, transported and their property confiscated. A vigorous measure of this kind is after all the best cure in the end and is certain to prove more effectual in eradicating the seeds of dissension and disloyalty which seem to have taken deep root in the hearts of all Kukas. Special arrangements might be adopted to detect their seditious communications ; and if necessary, on a fixed date all Kukas throughout the province should be searched for arms and documents." At the end of the letter, it was hinted that Mr. Wakefield, Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, was "willing to adopt some of the restrictive measures of 1872-73," provided he was assured of approval of his action by the Government.

Much against the wishes of Wakefield and Warburton, the Government preferred a policy of 'wait and see'. Already there was a great deal of repression. If in spite of it the Kukas were showing signs of revival, it clearly showed that no hasty intensification of it would solve the problem. Anyway, the Govern-

ment thought that there was no urgent necessity to resort to the wholesale measures suggested by Warburton. For the time being it was considered sufficient that the communications between Ram Singh and his followers should be put an end to by removing him from Rangun to Mergui[1]. But did this measure succeed ? The answer is no, for it failed to stop the communications altogether on the one hand and on the other served to add to the Kukas' bitterness.

The British reverses in Afghanistan and the reports of Russian friendliness brought by Gurcharan Singh and Bishen Singh stirred the Kukas all the more.

All through the year 1880 reports poured in from several districts, but mostly from Ludhiana, making reference to their excitement[2]. In April 1880 the District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, reported: "The Kukas are at present in a state of excitement; they hold frequent consultations and Baba Budh Singh of Bhaini is visited by men from distant places." In August a report from Ferozepur mentioned that "it is commonly said among the Kukas' sect that the time has come for the Russians to invade India through Kabul." On the 9th October it was heard from Ludhiana that "Lal Singh of Gumti stated that Budh Singh had told him that he had received a letter from Bishen Singh to the effect that the Russians had assumed a hostile attitude towards England." In November one Dewa Singh of Sanghera was found propagating that according to the sakhis the Russians would invade India in Sambat 1939 (A.D. 1882).

Between August 1872 and March 1881 a large number of letters of Baba Ram Singh's were intercepted by the Government. In April 1881 a brochure was published on them, including the d.o. letters of Warburton written from time to time. The introduction to it was

1. Even this was not done immediately.
2. Foreign Department (Secret-F), August 1889, Cons. 114-115.

written by Mr. C. Brown, Assistant to the Inspector General of Police, Punjab, Special Branch. While summing up his impressions of the letters, he expressed a view on the role that Ram Singh was playing at the time in rousing the feelings of his followers. He wrote[1] : "As I reported in November last there is no definite plan traceable in these letters of Ram Singh's, yet the constant allusion to the prophecies regarding the disturbances in the years 34-40, the reference to kine-killing, the mention of the Russians and the statement that Ram Singh will return to his country when the Malaichh are driven out of it, are, I think, intended to make the Kukas believe that the present is their opportunity."

An idea of the Kuka activities within the country during the year 1881 may be had from an Abstract of Intelligence of the Punjab Police[2]. According to it a secret meeting was held by 150 Kukas in the dhak jungle near village Laton (not far from Bhaini) on the 17th March. The police reached the spot and arrested 39 out of them, who were later on released on bail. Suba Kanh Singh of Baja and Jaimal Singh abused the policemen at Bhaini, for which act they were arrested and asked to furnish security in the sum of Rs. 1000/- each. On the 28th March Subas Gurdas Singh of Naiwala, Khushal Singh and Natha Singh were ordered to furnish security of Rs. 1000/-each for one year for their undesirable activities. About the same time one Kuka was found going from village to village telling members of the sect to go to Bhaini as the time predicted by the Guru had come, while some of them were arrested at the Sahnewal railway station on their way to Bhaini. One of them was found on search to be in possession of "an extract from the seditious letter by Ram Singh, which was brought from Rangun in 1877 by Mahant Naina Singh of Varyah

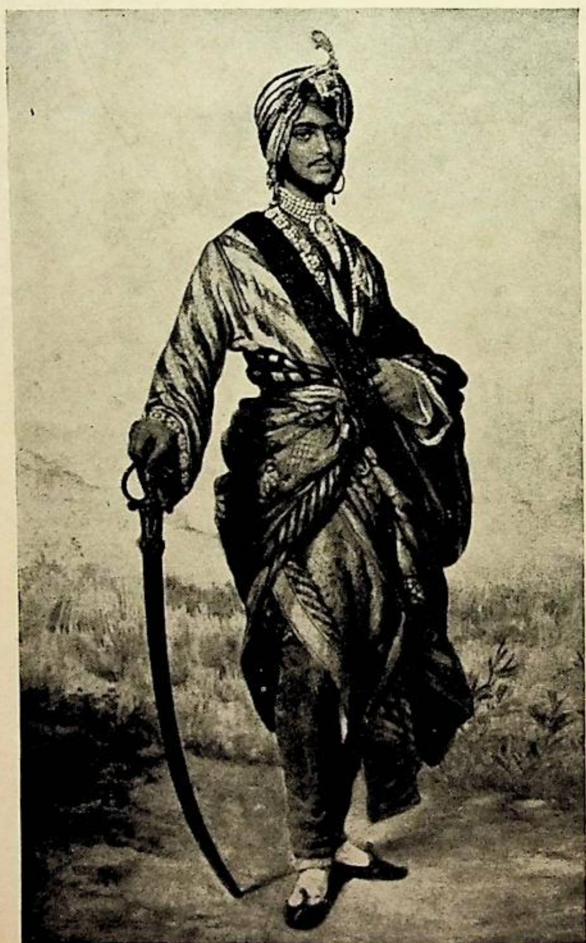
1. Home Judicial, October 1881, Progs. 188-195.
2. Foreign Department (Secret), Cons. 558-599.

and Bhagwan Singh,both of the Amritsar District." They were all asked to find security for one year in the sum of Rs. 1000/- each.

From 1882 to 1888 the Kukas were in an expectant mood. All eyes were riveted on Russia and Bishen Singh, subsequently also on Maharaja Dalip Singh. In February 1882 the District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, made mention of a rumour that Baba Ram Singh had joined Bishen Singh who would guide the Russian army to Hindustan, as mentioned in the sakhis. The other reports for the year are dated 25th March, 29th April, 28th August and 5th July respectively[1]. The first three came from Ludhiana and the last from Gurdaspur. The Ludhiana reports made reference to: (a) four Kukas having left Jammu to join Bishen Singh in Russia ; (b) a statement by one Gulab Singh of Kamalpur as to the Russian preparations for an early invasion of India ; and (c) some discussion between Kanh Singh and Gulab Singh of Kamalpur on the expulsion of the English from India. The report from Gurdaspur stated that "members of the sect were showing signs of activity", and that "there was a general belief that Russia would come to their assistance."

Reports for the years 1883-1886 are to the same effect. There are frequent mentions in them of Kukas slipping away from India to Russia via Kashmir and Kashgar or via Kabul. Ganga Singh and his son Gurbaksh Singh, Aroras of Ramki (Gujranwala District), who were in the employ of the Jammu state, were greatly helpful in guiding to the Russian border any person sent there by Baba Budh Singh, while Baba Kanh Singh of Hazru was instrumental in arranging to send Kukas via Kabul to Bishen Singh in Russia. At the annual Baisakhi fair held at Amritsar in the spring of 1884 a "*Bara Mah*" (cycle of song) was recited by one Dewa Singh of Shahbazpur in the Ferozepur District. It

1. Foreign Department (Secret-F), August 1889, Cons. 114-115.



MAHARAJA DALIP SINGH

caused considerable excitement among the listeners, as it referred to the butcher murders of Amritsar, the Kuka rising of 1872 and the exile of Baba Ram Singh. In this poem Bishen Singh was referred to as "the Guru's precious jewel and martyr, who has a large following, has entered into negotiations with others who have expressed their readiness to join him[1]." It is a measure of the Kuka agitation that in January 1883 a constable of the police post at Bhaini was murdered by a Kuka, named Arbangi Das[2] (Bhagwan Singh).

In 1885 Baba Ram Singh died at Mergui, still in exile. It could be a great shock to the Kukas, but they simply refused to be daunted by the news by declaring that their Guru had not died, but had escaped from detention. In fact, their belief even up to now is that he is still alive and will live up to the age of 250 years.

Meanwhile, Maharaja Dalip Singh had become thoroughly disillusioned with the British Government and was openly denouncing the unjust and dishonest manner in which he had been treated. In early 1886 he determined to quit England for good and settle down in his native country. This sent a thrill of joy through the whole body of the Kuka Sikhs. In the words of the Punjab Government[1] they "looked forward to Dhulip Singh's coming with pleasure[3]." When they heard that he was on the way to India, four Kukas started for Bombay to meet him. According to the letter of the Punjab Government dated 15th May 1886[4] they believed that "Ram Singh's spirit has entered into Dhulip Singh."

In this connection a mention must also be made of the publication of a book in Urdu entitled *Khurshed-i-*

1. Ibid. For details see Home Judicial (B), July 1884, Progs. 272-274.
2. Foreign Department, Secret-1, Cons. June 1886, Nos. 12-196.
3. Foreign Department, Secret-1, Progs. June 1886, Nos. 12-196.
Punjab Government to Government of India, 12th December 1885 (confidential).
4. Ibid.

Khalsa[1]. The author of this book was Bawa Nihal Singh. He was a thanadar in the Kalsia state, and both he and his brother Sarmukh Singh were at one time confessedly members of the Kuka sect. They were still Kukas at heart, although they had cast off the visible symbols of their creed as a matter of precaution. Both of them belonged to the Sandhanwalia party, of which S. Thakur Singh was the chief. The *Khurshed-i-Khalsa* gave a brief history of the Sikhs from the time of Guru Nanak. While discussing the Kukas, it highly praised the work of their leader and called him Guru Ram Singh. The book also spoke of the restoration of the Khalsa raj under Maharaja Dalip Singh. The Kukas were naturally happy over the publication of this book. The printer of the book, too, was a Kuka-Dewan Buta Singh of Lahore, proprietor of the Aftab-i-Punjab Press.

But Maharaja Dalip Singh was not allowed to come to India. He was detained on the way at Aden. From here he went back to Europe. He stayed for some time in France and then via Germany proceeded to Russia. Towards the end of 1886 information (based on rumours) was received from Suba Bishen Singh that Maharaja Dalip Singh had arrived in Russia. This greatly raised the Kukas' hopes. They were now fully assured of freedom from the rule of the Malechh Farangi. Jubilantly, a fair was held on 23rd July 1887 by the Kukas of the village Chura in the Hoshiarpur District, at which, among other things, mention was made that "Suba Bishen Singh had joined Dalip Singh in Russia and that the Maharaja was arranging for assistance for the invasion of the Punjab[2]." The Kukas were greatly excited when they talked of Dalip Singh and performed *Chandi Path*, which worked up their feelings all the more. Some time later, some Kukas were sent with presents and letters for the Maharaja in Russia.

1. Ibid. The book was objected to by the Khalsa Dewan, Lahore on two grounds : (i) it was anti-British; (ii) it called Ram Singh a guru. For this Bawa Nihal Singh was expelled from the Panth (Sikh community).
2. Foreign Department (Secret-F), August 1889, Cons. 114-115.

When passing through Meshed they were noticed by General MacLean who informed the Government of India about it.

Upon this one Mr. A.S. was set to trace them out. He was the man who, in the course of his detective itinerary, went to Bhaini and posing as a true Kuka extracted from Baba Budh Singh some valuable secrets[1] regarding the Kuka communications with Russia. Since he was accompanied by a well-known Kuka Suba, Khushal Singh, Baba Budh Singh did not have the least suspicion about A.S. and told him frankly about Bishen Singh, Gurcharan Singh, Baba Kanh Singh of Hazru and several others, as also about the way he managed to send his men and communications to Russia. It was here that A.S. learnt that Mahant Gurcharan Singh[2] had gone up to Hazru intending to go on to Kabul, but had been turned back by Baba Kanh Singh, because the road from Peshawar to Kabul was unsafe and further, that he would again shortly leave for Kabul "on his way to Russia to seek aid from the Czar." Probably, it was on the information supplied by him that the Government issued fresh instructions ordering the Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot that Gurcharan Singh's movements should be closely and narrowly watched.

Maharaja Dalip Singh remained in Russia till November 1888. Declaring himself as the "sovereign of the Sikh nation and proud, implacable foe of England[3]," he took residence in Moscow and got into secret communication with the Kukas and other Sikhs. An appeal was issued to the people of India holding out certain assurances and asking for help. A summary of this appeal was later on published in the Times of August 5, 1889, which stated: "In prevision of the future and as his royal decree he demands a monthly subscription of one pice from each of the 250,000,000 but from each in the Punjab one

1. Ibid. Note by the Foreign Secretary.
2. Ibid.
3. Dr. Leitner to L. Griffin, 1893. *Asiatic Quarterly, 1894.*

anna. The public debt of India is (in this document) repudiated; the payment of taxes is forbidden; cow-killing is prohibited; prisoners are to be released and all persons, who have suffered tyranny and injustice, caused by the British Government, are to be reinstated in their rights. He purposes entering India with a European army with the material support of Russia."

But the Maharaja was not to be successful. The Russian diplomacy was guided by Russian and not by his interests. He had no material resources of his own. Further, hopes from his countrymen, particularly the non-Kuka Sikhs, were bitterly disappointed, when an indignant disclaimer was sent to him by the Khalsa Dewan, Lahore.

We are stopping here, having brought the story up to 1890 or near about. Obviously, the story is not complete. The Kukas' struggle for freedom did not end in 1890. Their hostility to the British was irrevocable and was continued far beyond the end of our period of study. In fact they never reconciled themselves to the British rule in India. The Government also had no illusions about it. All Kukas were suspect in its eyes. Occasionally, temptations were held out to win them over, but they were invariably spurned. They held themselves aloof with a fanaticism very nearly bordering on the one generally found in matters religious. This policy of aloofness entailed a heavy sacrifice on their part. They lagged behind educationally and also suffered economically, but the path once chosen was not abandoned. To them no sacrifice was too big for the recovery of national freedom and self-respect.

Chapter IX

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

THE Kuka Movement was one of the remarkable Indian movements of the second half of the 19th century. Its inception took shape under the very shadow of the Revolt of 1857. This Revolt, the largest since the advent of the British rule in India, was unprecedented also in the terrible revenge taken by the victorious imperialists.

A few instances will suffice. Lord Elphinstone wrote[1] to Sir John Lawrence about the British sack of Delhi in the following words : "After the siege was over, the outrages committed by our army are simply heart-rending. A wholesale vengeance is being taken without distinction of friend or foe. As regards the looting we have indeed surpassed Nadir Shah." The author of *Qaysar-ul-Twarikh* writes that "the number of persons executed in Delhi was 27,000[2]." The city of Lucknow, after its seizure by the British, was treated to a similar blood-bath. What happened in the countryside between Banaras, Allahabad and Kanpur during General Neill's march through the area is depicted by Kaye and Malleson as follows[3] : "Volunteer hanging parties went out into the districts and amateur executioners were not wanting to the occasion. One gentleman boasted of the numbers he had finished off quite in an artistic manner, with mango trees for gibbets and elephants as drops, the victims of this wild justice being

1. Aitchison, *Life of Lawrence*, Vol. II, P. 262.
2. Ibid, P. 454.
3. *History of the Indian Mutiny*, Vol. II, P. 177.

strung up, as though for past time, in the form of a figure of 8."

The Punjab, too, did not escape the revenge of the infuriated Britisher. Between Ambala and Delhi "hundreds of Indians were condemned to be hanged before a court-martial in a short time, and they were most brutally and inhumanly tortured, while scaffolds were being erected for them. The hair on their heads were pulled by bunches, their bodies were pierced by bayonets and then they were made to do that to avoid which they would think nothing of death or torture—cow's flesh was forced by spears and bayonets into the mouth of the poor and harmless Hindu villagers[1]."

As the result of the atrocious vengeance taken by the Government, the people of India, especially north India, were greatly cowed down. It required then a unique and rare courage to think of, to talk of and to work for, defiance of authority. But this is what the Kukas did, and in so doing they not only exhibited the irrepressibility of the human spirit, but also set up a tradition of national heroism and kindled the torch of freedom which burnt brighter and brighter as the time passed by.

Both in its inception and during its later development, the Kukas' was a religious, social and political movement, all rolled into one. All these aspects were considered mutually complementary and were duly emphasised. The religious and social aspects were regarded as of basic importance and politics divorced from them, it was believed, merely bred petty-minded intrigues. The inter-relationship of morality and politics was an old canon of the Sikh (rather Indian) political philosophy. This canon was brought to a new life and vigour by the Kukas. As a corollary from this, it was emphasised that religion and morality, besides being a source of mental peace and happiness, were a sure fount of power. Their cultivation led to gain of

1. **Quoted by Vir Savarkar in *Indian War of Independence*, P. 134.**

prowess and strength, while their disregard led to their loss.

Religiously and socially, the Kuka Movement was a continuance as well as a logical development of the movement initiated by Baba Balak Singh of Hazru in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Baba Ram Singh was a disciple of Baba Balak Singh and paid him a number of visits at his place. He thoroughly imbibed his ideas regarding religious and social reforms, and tried, as instructed by his spiritual master, to inculcate the virtues of love of God, selfless social service, purity of living, simplicity of habits, charitableness and truthfulness. Nasty social taboos, meaningless and cumbersome customs, cruel social practices like female infanticide and child marriage and mercenary usages like sale of wives in marriage, use of intoxicants and animal flesh etc. were made the targets of a ruthless campaign. Similarly, superstitious worship of graves, cremation marks, tombs and smadhs was mercilessly assailed. For such of the people as elected to enter the fold of the Kuka creed a strict code of conduct was prescribed. The result was the emergence of a new fraternity living on a plane of life higher than that followed by the rest of the community. A contemporary Indian historian Maulvi Gulam Bhikh Jullunduri testifies to the Kukas' high character in the following words[1] : "They shun every evil as a sin. Stealing, adultery, drinking, in fact all evils, meat-eating and falsehood are absolutely forbidden among them. He who becomes a Kuka is strictly enjoined to obey the Guru, to observe the doctrine, and to lead a life of austerity and self-sacrifice. Their chief principle is : Be ready to die, have no desire for life and think yourself humble as dust, then and then alone become a Kuka. A life-long righteousness is enjoined upon each one of them. In the Kuka sect a hypocrite or a corrupt man is seldom seen."

1. *Tarikh-i-Wakri* (Urdu, completed in 1882), Pp. 142—148.

The utility or importance of the above improvements of the Kukas must be assessed in the context of the times in which they were made. By all accounts our religious and social values were then at a very low ebb. In the religious sphere we gave weight to the form rather than to the substance. The result was that the people were entangled in a web of rites and ceremonies, which fact made them virtual slaves of the priesthood. In the same way in the social sphere there were numerous gross evils. The status of the woman had touched the nadir ; the marriage system was marked by several malpractices; and the caste system was assuming new rigours. So far as the Sikhs were concerned, they were rapidly losing their distinctive reformed character and sliding back into the popular Hinduism. Kukaism, then, in its religio-social aspects represented a force of progress and regeneration.

Politically, the Kuka Movement may be looked upon as the sequel of Bhai Maharaj Singh's Khalsa nationalism rather than of Baba Balak Singh's Jagyasi Abhyasi movement. It is possible that Baba Balak Singh, too, had political ideas, but unfortunately they are not yet definitely known. Until they are known (and even after that) it will be more plausible to think that the upsurge of Khalsa nationalism on the eve of the British conquest of the Punjab under the leadership of men like Maharaj Singh had deep influence upon the leader of the Kuka Movement, Baba Ram Singh. He had himself lived through those days and though at the time had taken no active part, being absorbed in meditations, he could not be unaware of what was happening around him. From the occasional references to Bhai Maharaj Singh made by him in his letters, we can infer what great respect Baba Ram Singh had for him.

The post-annexation period in the Punjab was most trying for the Sikhs. All their leaders, who had fought in the late war, were sent into exile. Chatar Singh,

Sher Singh, Autar Singh (all of Attari), Lal Singh Moraria, Mehtab Singh Majithia, Hakim Rai, Kanwar Kishan Singh, Arjan Singh and Dewan Mul Raj were sent to the Allahabad Fort to be detained permanently. Dewan Mul Raj was later on removed still farther off to Calcutta. Bhai Maharaj Singh, the main force behind the national struggle against the British, was at large for some time, engaged in preparations for stealing away the person of Maharaja Dalip Singh and making another bold bid for independence. But he, too, was arrested in December 1849 and sent into exile. With the leadership thus disposed of, the field was cleared for the creation by the Government of a new aristocracy obliged to it by the grant of jagirs and other favours. This new elite was naturally out of sympathy with the aims and objects of Sikh nationalism. They were forced by their petty selfish interests to play the loyalist, even where the vital interests of their own community or the country as a whole were involved. Besides this, several other steps were taken by the rulers to stamp out the sentiment of nationality among the Sikhs. All of them, excepting a few mercenaries, were dismissed from the armed forces. Strictest orders were passed banning the keeping and carrying of all lethal weapons, including the kirpan which is one of the five essential 'Ks' enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh. Attempts were also made to win over the Muslims of the Punjab in order further to weaken the Sikhs or to give a feeling of satisfaction to the people by putting through a few items of public works or by establishing a firm law and order.

What was the effect of all these measures ? Was the Sikhs' national sentiment stamped out ? What was the measure of success achieved by the British ? It will not be contested that the Sikhs suffered a serious setback in their feeling of nationality on account of the Government policy. The edge of Sikh nationalism was blunted, though temporarily; it was divested of patriotic leader-

ship; and what is still worse, a whole host of temptations were dangled to appeal to the baser emotions of the people. But the feeling of nationality was too deeply rooted to be extirpated easily. Though somewhat depressed at the moment, the Sikhs in their thousands, if not in their lacs, were harbouring feelings of antagonism to the British and wished the early restoration of their independent 'raj'.

The question may be asked : Why then did they help the British in 1857 and not avail themselves of the great opportunity provided by the Revolt ? In order to ascertain why they helped the British, it is pertinent to ask first who did so. The principal Sikh assistance came from the rulers of the Patiala, Nabha and Jind states. But their assistance should be regarded as coming from maharajas rather than from members of the Sikh community. They behaved in the way in which most of the Indian rulers then behaved. As for others, there were more who revolted or sat on the fence or watched than those who helped. If there were Sikhs who helped Hodson and Cortlandt, there were also Sikhs who perished by the Britisher's hand for having revolted against the Government. The Sikhs who helped were mercenaries who joined the service neither from any love of the British nor from any real hatred of the Purbia sepoy, but under pecuniary allurements. No importance should be attached to their slogans that it was the religious duty of the Sikhs to help the British in fulfilment of Guru Tegh Bahadur's prophecy and to fight against the tyrannical Timurid House, because they were cleverly excited by the British who knew so well how to use one Indian community against another.

And the assistance they rendered was perhaps not so great as it has been construed. The reason is the considerable help rendered by the cis-Sutlej states, but for which it would not have assumed the magnified proportions that it now has. When the Revolt broke

out, the first reaction of the Sikhs was "wait and watch." This was quite natural, because it was started by the Purbias against whom a certain amount of prejudice no doubt persisted in the minds of the Sikhs. Moreover, they had no idea of what the Purbias were going to do and why, because they had not been taken into confidence. But the policy of "wait and watch" proved most crucial, as it gave the Government time enough to take all the necessary precautionary measures.

Even then something could have been done, given the proper leadership. So far as the feelings of the Sikh ranks at the time are concerned, they are beautifully described in a parliamentary paper of the year 1859[1] :

"As regards the Sikhs, one decade only has passed since they were the dominant power in the Punjab. They are a highly military race. Their prejudices are comparatively few, but their religion constitutes a strong bond of union; though depressed by political disaster, it has still vitality and a power of expansion through the admission of new converts. It might revive in a moment through any change of circumstances and spread far and wide. Again, the memory of the Khalsa or Sikh Commonwealth may sleep, but is not yet dead. A spirit of nationality and military ambition still survives in the minds and hearts of thousands among Sikhs. It were vain to suppose that thoughts of future triumphs and future independence did not cross the imagination of these people[2]; that aspirations of restoring the Khalsa were not excited during the summer of 1857....Universal revolt in the Punjab would have broken out, if Delhi had not fallen soon into our hands."

If in spite of all this nothing happened, the fault should surely lie with leadership or lack of it. "Then

1. No. 238, P. 18.

2. The following fact is mentioned by Mr. T. D. Forsyth in his letter of the 6th July 1872 to the Government of India :

When the Revolt broke out in 1857, "a Sikh at Rupar called on his co-religionists to declare cow-killing at an end and to proclaim the Khalsa. The man was apprehended, tried and instantly hanged and thus a dangerous spark was put out." Home Judicial (A), July 1872, Progs. 212-220.

fortunately", writes the same parliamentary paper[1], "the class of men who once had been leaders in strife and round whom the disaffected might rally were scarcely to be found in the Punjab."

The much-wanted leadership was furnished by the Kuka Movement. But since it was just started in 1857, its impact appeared later and not during the days of the Revolt. One only wishes that it had begun earlier and given the correct lead to the community. It is almost admitted by our historical scholarship that the rising of 1857 was not national in the true sense of the term. Even so, here was a great opportunity missed by the patriotic elements. The requisite stuff was there. What was needed was a determined and imaginative leader to mould and use that stuff in the right way to produce, if possible, the right result. Were the stuff not there or more clearly, were the ranks of the Sikhs devoid of a national urge to win back their freedom, how could Baba Ram Singh have raised, in the short space of a decade or so, the number of his followers to lacs ? The wonderful response to the ideas of the Baba presupposes the existence of favourable objective conditions in the land.

Whether it was the religious, social or political sphere, in each case the inspiration was derived from the Gurus, particularly Guru Gobind Singh. The western ideas, already in wide circulation in the country, held little charm for the Kukas, for the ideas of unity of God, brotherhood of men, equality of sexes and liberty, commonly considered the gift of the west, were present in Sikhism. Therefore, they believed that the need of the hour was not to hanker after European ideas, but to assimilate and practise what was already with them. Broadly speaking, there were four focal points in Kukaism, namely the Name (i. e. constant remembrance of God), social equality, order of the Khalsa, and Sikh

1. **Ibid, P. 17.**

nationality. The first two were the central fibres running through the Sikh religious and social doctrine and related to the teachings of all Gurus. The last two were the special gifts of Guru Gobind Singh, representing the fruit of the tree planted by Guru Nanak.

In the manner of Guru Gobind Singh a new order of the Khalsa was instituted called the 'Sant Khalsa'. The mode of baptism entitled Khande da Amrit, introduced by Gobind Singh and neglected long since, was reintroduced. The newly baptised Sikhs were enjoined to observe a strict code of discipline which usually went along with such an act of initiation. Besides, a few new features were added to give a distinctive character to the members of the Sant Khalsa so as to mark them off the rest of the community. Prominent among these new features were woollen rosary, all-white dress, and straight turban. Further, the Kukas looked up to their leader Ram Singh as a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh, received from him a secret gurmantar in their ears and obeyed him implicitly. But these novelties of Kukaism, howsoever correct psychologically and organisationally, were resented by the Sikh priesthood, and on account of this the Kukas had to suffer great hardships, both individually and collectively. However, it must be said to their credit that they weathered all storms bravely and held firmly to their beliefs, neither flinching nor faltering, though the general body of the Sikhs have never taken kindly to them. As regards the idea of Sikh nationality, the Kukas, like the members of Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa, regarded themselves as custodians of the interests of the Sikh commonwealth. They looked upon the rule of Ranjit Singh and his successors as Khalsa raj. They keenly felt its loss to the British and were anxious to bring it back. The loss being attributed primarily to the fall in the character of the Sikhs themselves, great stress was placed upon spiritual and moral uplift as a pre-condition of any regain of political freedom.

In the employment of methods, as noticed above in the case of ideas and principles, the Kukas harked back to Guru Gobind Singh. Like him they stressed military training and use of force for a righteous cause. In the words of Guru Gobind Singh, the sword is a "symbol of the brave," "the protector of the saints" and "the scourge of the wicked[1]." Its use is, however, permissible only as a remedy of the last resort, for the Guru has said in the *Zafarnama*[2] : "Cho kar az hama hilate dar guzashat, halal ast burdan b shamsher dast" (when all other means have proved ineffective, it is right then to take up the sword). According to *Prem Sumarg*, the Guru had instructed the Khalsa thus : "He must always put on sword. He should behave like a gentleman, but when he finds a tyrant incorrigible and when it is the question of righteousness or when the king has abandoned the path of justice, he may make use of the sword according to the contingency of the situation, but always as the last resort[3]." The Kukas had an implicit faith in these teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. If they were sincere in believing that Ram Singh was a reincarnation of Gobind Singh, it could not be otherwise. Nor is there any ground for doubting it, for force was made use of by them on several occasions.

However, the changed circumstances, under which the Kukas had to operate, imposed upon them certain things that are not traceable to Guru Gobind Singh's injunctions. In the days of Guru Gobind Singh there was absolutely no difficulty about imparting training in the use of weapons, staging sham fights for the purpose of practice or about carrying lethal weapons. He could even go to the extent of building forts without causing offence to the authorities. All this was simply impossible in the period of the Kukas. The argus-eyed vigilance of the British would allow them to do nothing

1. *Bachitar Natak*, 1; *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, P. 270.
2. Ibid, edited by Sant Kirpal Singh, P. 8.
3. Dr. Bhai Jodh Singh, *Gurmat Nirnei*, P. 285.

of the sort. In the beginning they were having some drill under cover of the night's darkness. At once reports were sent by the c.i.d. people to the Government. Thereafter, it had to be stopped. Later on, it was planned to have some men trained in the armies of the Indian states. A few steps were taken in this connection, but here, too, the vigilance of the Government proved a formidable stumbling block.

Another scheme was to have Kukas in the military and police services of the Government. But this, too, did not last long. Besides, the difficulty of weapons was so great that the Kukas felt hampered over and again for lack of them. For the attack on the butchers of Amritsar they had secretly to get a few swords from a constable of the Amritsar police. Similarly, for the attack on Maler Kotla they had first to attack the house of Badan Singh of Malodh. At Maler Kotla, too, the attack was made where they hoped to get some weapons. On account of the Arms Act it was impossible to carry arms, much less to manufacture them. Even in place of the kirpan, one of the five symbols enjoined by the Guru for baptised Sikhs, lathis had to be used by the Kukas.

In these circumstances it was essential that the Kuka organisation should function secretly. For this purpose, the first essential was an independent postal service. The official postal services could not be trusted for fear of censorship. The Kukas' own arrangements for the transmission of communications worked perfectly. The messages sent were seldom reduced to writing—such was the fear of their interception by the Government officials. Lest any official should harass the Kuka messengers, public highways gradually came to be avoided. The routes other than roads and railways were preferred for security's sake. The secretive ways of the Kukas (Asiatic Fenians[1] in the words of Lord Napier) excited

1. Home Judicial (A), April 1872, Progs. 153-156.

the authorities' suspicions all the more, but it could not be helped. And then the independent postal service was not alone. It was accompanied, for reasons of convenience, economy, self-respect and also necessity, by an independent judicial service. The justice dispensed in the courts set up by the British Government was expensive, dilatory and humiliating. Therefore, all Kukas were forbidden to resort to these courts and were asked to settle their disputes among themselves by means of self-constituted panchayats or through the help of their Subas. This arrangement was also necessary because in the event of Kuka cases being taken up by the official judicial machinery, there was every likelihood of disclosure of the secrets of their organisation.

The independent postal and judicial services set up by the Kukas gave semblance of a parallel government which was run by a carefully-devised and well-knit organisation. The whole Sikh portion of the province was "divided into districts and sub-divisions in the charge of Subas, directly subordinate to the Guru, while Kuka emissaries and agents are stationed in many parts of India and in the states on its immediate border.[1]" As the result of "the completeness of its organisation", it was said in a confidential paper of the Punjab Government[2], "the strength of the Kuka sect is much increased."

It will be clear from above that the principle of boycott could not be possibly avoided by the Kukas. This principle is implied in the establishment of independent dak and judicial systems mentioned above. It was extended to service under the Government after the year 1872, because there was a danger then that the Government might try to buy over the Kukas by certain temptations. Similarly, the educational institutions of the Government were avoided. But here the objection

1. Home Judicial (A), June 1872, Progs. 107-111—Minute by the Lieut. Governor of the Punjab, dated 26th February 1872.
2. Ibid.

seems to be deeper than the mere undesirability of attending the official schools and colleges. The Kukas were not opposed to education as such, for the greatest stress was laid by Baba Ram Singh on the teaching of the mother tongue, Punjabi, through its own script and on the imparting of religious instruction. What they were opposed to was the new system of education introduced by the foreign rulers. They disliked it for its materialistic approach and content and thought that nothing but evil would result from it. That is the reason why all educational institutions modelled on the western lines, whether they were run by the Government or privately, were avoided. Consequently, they suffered educationally in the long run. But their hatred for the 'Malechh', that is the British, prevented them from looking at the matter otherwise. The Kukas have included in the list of their boycotts one of the British-manufactured cloth as well. There is no doubt that by and large they put on the country-made khadar in our period. But whether they did it as a matter of principle or otherwise, we have no definite evidence to say. It is possible that its significance as a political principle was recognised only subsequently when the idea of swadeshi became popular in the country.

A careful study of the Kuka boycott will show that it was necessitated by the difficult circumstances under which the Kukas had to function. It was thus a matter of necessity rather than a matter of choice, and as such does not seem to be with them a conscious instrument of political struggle. But it was there and its importance should not be underestimated merely because it was differently conceived from the one adopted by the Congress later on. The reason is that the various boycotts played no meagre role in conditioning the general outlook of the Kukas. They followed, it is true, the approach and methods of Guru Gobind Singh in their struggle against the British, but even then it may be said that

a certain stamp was left on them by their diverse boycotts. It was because of this and Guru Gobind Singh's influence that the District Gazetteer of Ludhiana (1883) wrote : "The truth is it is not possible for a Kuka to be a loyal subject of the British Government[1]".

While discussing the political methodology of the Kukas, it is necessary also to refer to their appeal to religious sentiments. Their repeated references to the prophecies of the 'Sau Sakhis[2]' as those of Guru Gobind Singh and to Baba Ram Singh as a God-realized man having miraculous powers and able to foretell the future were all efforts to arouse the religious feelings of the people. In the same category were their references to gau-hatya (cow slaughter) and chandi-path, a religious ceremony intended to work up martial qualities. The word 'malechh', which was used for the British and with which the contemporary records are replete, also had a religious connotation. In appealing to religion for a political purpose, the Kuka leadership seems to have shown a remarkably correct grasp of the Indian people's psychology and thereby to have indicated a path which was so successfully used by the nationalists of the later period, such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh, B.G. Tilak and Gandhiji, etc.

As regards the Kukas' conception of freedom, their object of re-establishment of the Khalsa raj in the Punjab needs to be understood in the context of the historical stage reached by then in the evolution of India. Considered in terms of the 20th century conditions, this object appears narrow, but at the time the Kuka Movement appeared there was no concept of what

1. Ibid (1883), P. 69.

2. Macnabb wrote on 4th November 1872 : "Lastly, every Kuka who can read has a book printed by Dewan Boota Singh of Lahore, a well-known seditious character. This book contains all the parts of Grunth inciting to war, i.e. the "Goor (Ugar) Dunte" and "Chandi-Path" from Guru Gobind Singh's Grunth. There are also three other books—"Sau Sakhee." "Baba Geeta ka Goshut" and "Kurnee Namah". These three books are not so generally kept by Kukas, but none will deny that they are of the Kuka sect and approved by Ram Singh."—Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112—132.

we call today Indian nationalism. People then thought in terms of regions and communities and not India and Indian nation as a whole. The rise of Indian nationalism in its conscious and functional form was a subsequent development and even after its rise, its growth has been a slow process. Therefore, the Kuka aim was a legitimate aim, normal to the period of their rise and as broad as the people could conceive at the time. However, later on when the Indian nationalism became a reality, the Kukas displayed no hesitation in joining the mainstream of nationalism. It was because of their long tradition of anti-imperialist fight that they found no difficulty in identifying themselves with the forces working for the country's freedom. Their minds expanded and their horizons widened with the nation achieving new milestones on the road of its evolution.

Unlike the Revolt of 1857, which was primarily a feudal rising, the Kuka Movement was a people's affair. Its membership was derived from the lower classes of the countryside. Subsequently, "a number of petty sirdars and men of family" no doubt were included "among its avowed adherents[1]," but the general pattern of its composition was hardly materially affected, though even this caused concern to the Government. There were many fugitives from the ranks of the disbanded Khalsa Army and of the mutinous regiments of 1857 found on its rolls. They joined it in the hope of finding a suitable outlet for their adventurous spirits. But they, too, generally came from the ordinary class of people.

All Kukas, big and small, were from the countryside and in one way or the other depended upon agriculture. The majority of them were drawn from the Jat Sikhs. This fact is well brought out by the Gazetteer of Ludhiana District (1883), which writes : "It is very doubtful whether it can be said that even the majority of the

1. **Home Judicial (A), June 1872, Progs. 107-111.**

Kukas are drawn from the lowest classes, for the sect has made much more progress amongst the Jat Sikhs than any returns would show[1]." All these Jat Sikhs were agriculturists. The others, too, if not themselves cultivators, had vital interest in agriculture. Therefore, what happened to agriculture could not be a matter of unconcern to them. It does not appear that any economic factor was the main cause of the Kuka Movement. Still it is possible to think that economic hardships of the people might have lent a measure of poignancy to their bitterness against the Government. It is in this context that study of the economic situation of the period as affecting the agrarian society becomes important.

Quick and far-reaching changes in the land and land revenue systems were being made at this time. Immediately after the annexation, short-term summary settlements of a rough and ready kind based on general money assessment were effected. The people were put to great hardship, because the demand was excessive and had to be paid in cash. Since the prices fell by 50% in 1851, the revenue payers found the state demand far beyond their means. The demand was reduced, but the reduction was hardly adequate. From 1851 long-term regular settlements were commenced, which could not be accomplished until 1860. The difficulties of the early days of the British rule continued. The reductions made occasionally provided no satisfactory answer to the people's sufferings. From 1863 a new cycle of settlements was initiated which went on till 1875. Again, it was found that the state demand was too high. Some reductions were again made to mitigate the people's troubles. But the total burden was enhanced and not decreased, since several cesses were now added to the revenue demand. Besides, there were famines in 1860-61 and in 1868-69.

1. P. 69; Punjab District Gazetteers, Vol. XV (A); Ludhiana District and Maler Kotla State Gazetteer (1904), P. 85.

Then, there was the assessment of waste-lands and rent-free tenures, which must have adversely affected the people dependent on them. There was also deterioration in the position of tenants who, on account of their frequent ejectments, lost the security they once used to enjoy.

As is natural with a people's movement, it was a popular and growing movement from the very beginning. To the British Government this phenomenon was a source of great concern. The Lieut. Governor of the Punjab remarks in one of his confidential communications to the Governor General[1] : "The real danger of that creed in the form which it has now assumed consists in this, that it appeals strongly to the sympathies of a large section of the native community outside the circle of avowed Kukas. The denunciation of kine-killing and even the active measures taken against the butchers at Raikot and Amritsar have enlisted to a certain extent the sympathies of even well-disposed Hindus; while the predictions of a restoration of the Khalsa rule appeal to the sympathies of all Sikhs who have not forgotten the traditions of the past. There is evidence, no doubt, to show that no general coalition exists at present between the orthodox Sikhs and the Kukas; but there is also evidence to show that the hostile feeling between these sects is less strong than formerly in the recent large accession to the numbers of Kukas from the ranks of the Sikhs...." "Those who least give way to his (Baba Ram Singh's) pretensions," writes[2] the same authority in one of his minutes, "admit that the hearts of all good Hindus are with him in his holy horror of kine-killing. The prominence given by him in his preaching to the militant doctrines of Guru Gobind Singh revives the hopes of the more adventurous spirits who love to recall the transfor-

1. Home Judicial (A), June 1872, Progs. 107-111. Punjab Government to the Government of India, dated Lahore 22nd February 1872.

2. Ibid. Minute by the Lieut. Governor of the Punjab, dated 26th February 1872.

mation of their ancestors from Zamindars into Sirdars. A common religion, nationality and ambition incline the secret sympathies of the non-Muhammadan population between the Jumna and Jhelum towards the new Guru's self-reliant re-assertion of their own primitive mysticism; and they contemplate with troubled feelings of awe and admiration his practical confession of the faith that removes mountains."

The Government alone was not hostile to the Kuka Movement. There were certain sections within the Indian society itself that opposed it and rallied to the Government in suppressing it. Among them were the Maharajas of the Punjab states, leading chiefs and jagirdars, government officials, headmen of the circles and villages (Zaildars and Lambardars), Sodis and Bedis, Mahants of gurdwaras and Brahmins. All these people had vested interests and they had the least sympathy for those who threatened them in any way. They generally stood by the Government to safeguard their interests or to win favours further to improve their prospects. By their standing in the society and for their good behaviour towards the authorities they constituted the gentry. The Government, too, on its part continued bestowing favours on this gentry to keep it attached to its interests and to use it as a bulwark of defence against popular forces. So far as the Kukas were concerned, these people spied on them, sent secret reports about them to the authorities and mobilised public opinion in favour of the Government. For instance, many of them in 1872 sent representations[1] defending the actions of Cowan and Forsyth in blowing off the Kuka prisoners at Maler Kotla, when they heard that the Government was displeased with them for these actions. Similarly, when Baba Ram Singh and his Subas were exiled, many resolutions were passed by the

1. See Appendix II; also Home Judicial (A), Progs. January 1873, Nos. 124-126.

members of this gentry in support of the Government's action. One of them was the following[1] :

> "The Sikhs of all classes of Amritsar beg unanimously to submit that we have no connection or sympathy with the Kukas. We are happy that the Government have adopted most appropriate and excellent measures for controlling this wicked and misguided sect. They are our mortal enemies, since by their miscouduct and evil designs they injured our honour in the estimation of Government. We are thankful to the Government for the measures which have been adopted whereby the desire of our hearts has been fulfllled." Dated 22nd March 1872.

This was signed, among others, by Bakshish Singh and Thakar Singh Sandhanwalias, Bhagwan Singh and Dial Singh Majithias, Jawahar Singh of Zafarwal, Mangal Singh Ramgarhia, Gulab Singh Bhagowalia and Ajit Singh of Atari—all members of the upper class. It was with reference to such people that the Lieut. Governor of the Punjab wrote in 1872 [2] : "There is in addition the unanimous belief among loyal and intelligent natives that the Kuka Movement is one which the Government cannot afford to regard with indifference." Their reaction to the Government action against the Kukas was explained by him in these eloquent terms[3]: "It is undoubtedly some such alarmed sense of the potency of the spell wielded by the Guru that finds expression in the general relief experienced by the gentry of all denominations not only in the deportation of himself and his leading Subahs but also in the wholesale and terrifying executions precipitated

1. Quoted in Jaswant Singh, op. cit., P. 133. On the same day the Punjab Government sent the following telegram to the Government of India : "At a Durbar held at Amritsar today to commemorate the recovery of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, all the Chiefs of the Sikhs presented a spontaneous address, expressing their hostility to the Kukas and their tenets and heartily approving the measures of repression adopted by the Government." Home (Judicial-A), Progs. March 1872, No. 235.

2. Home Judicial (A), June 1872, Progs. 107-111.

3. Ibid.

at Kotla. It is to them as if some monstrous dragon had been killed, the very breath of which, had it been suffered to live, would have bred pestilence and mortality throughout the country."

The principal aim with which the Kuka Movement was initiated was political, though great weight was attached to religious and social regeneration, which was thought most necessary for the attainment of the chosen political goal. However, the political commitments of the movement were not very clear for some time after its commencement. This has misled some people into believing that it was not a political movement, at least in the beginning. This view is belied by the facts of the situation. Only a few years after its commencement a stir was created—and it could not be wholly unfounded, whatever be the exaggeration attached to it—which led to the imposition of severe restrictions on the movement of Baba Ram Singh and his followers. These restrictions imparted a new vigour to the movement. By 1872 there was absolutely no doubt left in the minds of the Government and its supporters as to the political character of the Kuka rising. "The Lieut. Governor observes," said one letter of the Punjab Government to the Government of India[1], "that the papers which have been submitted to the Government of India show that whatever the original tendency of Kuka doctrine may have been, they have now become of a political character, the designs of the leaders, more or less understood by their followers, being to attempt a restoration of the Sikh power in the Punjab."

The attack on Maler Kotla in 1872 was regarded not as an act of madness on the part of a few fanatics, but as the precursor of a large-scale rising. This was made amply clear by the Lieut. Governor in one of his minutes sent to the Government of India on 26th February 1872[2] : "Since that was written (the reference

1. Home Judicial (A), June 1872, Progs. 107-111.
2. Ibid.

is to his earlier letter of the 7th February) I have arrived at Ludhiana and have had an opportunity of conversing with all classes of the people and in particular with the leading personages of the Sikh and Muhammadan persuasions ; I have further received various communications in the Police Department relative to the present attitude of the Kukas. The tendency of the information I have thus additionally acquired is greatly to strengthen the opinion I have hitherto expressed as to the dangerous character of this conspiracy. I have seen no reason to doubt the correctness of Mr. Cowan's belief that "a serious outbreak was intended" and have no hesitation in saying that there are substantial grounds to apprehend a rebellion on the part ef the Kukas."

A line is drawn sometimes between Baba Ram Singh and his Subas and it is said that only the Subas were responsible for the political part of the Kuka Movement and that Baba Ram Singh had nothing to do with it, being interested purely in religious and social reforms. Undoubtedly, this view prevailed for some time in the earlier period. "After a personal interview with Ram Singh," wrote[1] Inspector Fazal Hussain in 1866, "I am of opinion that he in no way acts in opposition to the British Government. But some of his Subas (lieutenants) are bad men, who injure his reputation." The same opinion was voiced by some other people as well. But this view was totally abandoned later on. In all the Government papers relating to the year 1871 and after, there is no indication whatsoever of any such distinction being made between Baba Ram Singh and his Subas. On the contrary, the Kuka Movement was taken as a whole, which was headed by Ram Singh and which functioned under his and his Subas' direction and control. "It is impossible to disconnect Ram Singh from the action taken by his followers in the recent outbreak," wrote[2]

1. Home Judicial, August 1872, Progs. 273-284—Appendix I, P. 2461. Foreign Department (Political-A), February 1868, Cons. 202-203.

2. Home Judicial, June 1872, Progs. 112-132.

the Punjab Government to the Government of India on 7th February 1872. It was repeatedly emphasised that his followers had such an implicit faith in their leader that had he expressed his disapproval of it, they would never have taken the step they took. That he was no convenient tool in the hands of his ambitious Subas is clearly brought out in the following words of Mr. Macnabb who had a sustained interest in the progress of the Kuka Movement[1] : "No one who has seen and talked with Ram Singh will have failed to observe an intelligence, firmness, and decision of character which, coupled also with great self-restraint, do not belong to a mere religious enthusiast, still less to a puppet."

The Kuka Movement did not succeed in the achievement of its political aim. But little surprise need be expressed over this, because the Kukas had to function under severe limitations. Their physical resources were extremely limited. They did not have a sufficient supply even of the ordinary swords, much less firearms, and they were pitted against a mighty powerful Government whose resources seemed to know no end. They mainly depended upon rousing the patriotic feelings of the people by giving a religious tinge to their campaign. But this could not take them very far, because the level of general political consciousness in the country was yet very low. And then there was also the factor of the utmost vigilance on the part of the Government to contend with. This was the period immediately following the Revolt of 1857, when the Government was determined to root out all sedition with a heavy hand. Its sledge-hammer blow of 1872 was a symbol of this grim determination. After this the Kukas could never recover the old vigour.

And yet the movement did not wholly fail. After 1872 the Kuka leaders changed their tactics and almost entirely devoted themselves to efforts aimed at inducing

1. Ibid.

the Russians to come to the aid of India as against England. Here, too, they did not achieve success, because it was impossible that Russia should go out of her way to oblige them. But they were not discomfited, but keenly persisted, as before, in the pursuit of their national mission. It was here that their greatest success lay, for by their unbroken and unbending opposition to the Government they created a glorious tradition of patriotism, which will always find an honourable mention in the story of our freedom struggle against the foreign domination. In the maintenance of this tradition they had to undergo heavy sufferings, which might easily have demoralised less determined people. In spite of the hardships the torch once lit was kept burning by Baba Hari Singh (Budh Singh) and his distinguished sons, Maharaj Partap Singh, Maharaj Nihal Singh and Maharaj Gurdial Singh. The latter two threw themselves entirely into the Congress movement. Maharaj Nihal Singh,[1] for his dedication to the cause, was appointed dictator of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 for the area of the Punjab. Gradually, other political forces rose in the land, which derived inspiration from them. Among them the most notable was the Gadhar Movement of the early 20th century. The founder of the Gadhar Movement and first president of the Gadhar Party, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, owed much of his nationalism to a Kuka leader, Baba Kesar Singh, of the village Muhawa. He writes in his autobiographical sketch : "The complete boycott of the British courts, services, postal arrangements, even railways, that I noticed among the Namdharis, the Non-Cooperation Movement of the Congress was no match for it. I was in the company of the Babaji (Kesar Singh) from 1896 to 1906. The fact of the matter is that the life I am living

1. His interest in the National Movement remained unabated till the country won independence in 1947. He is over 70 now, but is still actively engaged in national work.

today is the gift of his noble company[1]."

As in the political sphere, in the social and religious spheres, too, the Kuka Movement represented a progressive force and may rightly be said to have paved the way for the subsequent Singh Sabha Movement. It would be historically incorrect to say that there was all darkness in the Sikh society when the Singh Sabha Movement started. In fact, it is only fair to assert that it simply carried forward the work begun by the Kuka Movement, giving in the process a new interpretation to the Sikh doctrine in the light of western influences.

1. *Meri Jiwan Kahani*, published in the Desh Bhagat (a monthly) of September 1963.

Appendix I

MAHARAJA DALIP SINGH

AS a background to Maharaja Dalip Singh's visit to and stay in Russia and his fraternising with the Kukas, it will be of immense value to attempt here a brief account of his estrangement with the British.

The Punjab lost her independent sovereign status on 29th March 1849 as the result of the British victory over the Sikhs in the Second Anglo-Sikh War. The Second Treaty of Lahore, through which the annexation was effected, laid down :

(i) His Highness the Maharaja Dalip Singh shall resign for himself, his heirs and successors all right, title and claim to the sovereignty of the Punjab or to any sovereignty power whatever.

(ii) All the property of the state, of whatever description and wherever found, shall be confiscated to the Honorable East India Company in part payment of the debts due by the State of Lahore to the British Government and of the expenses of the War.

(iii) The gem called the Koh-i-Noor, which was taken from Shah Shooja-ul-Mulk by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, shall be surrendered by the Maharaja of Lahore to the Queen of England.

(iv) His Highness Dalip Singh shall receive from the Honorable East India Company for the support of himself, his relatives and the servants of the state, a pension of not less than four and not exceeding five lakhs of Company's rupees per annum.

(v) His Highness shall be treated with respect and honour. He shall retain the title of Maharaja Dalip Singh Bahadur and he shall continue to receive during his life such portion of the above-named pension as may be allotted to himself personally, provided he shall remain obedient to the British Government and shall reside at such place as the Governor General of India may select.

In February 1850 Maharaja Dalip Singh was removed from Lahore to Fatehgarh where he lived till 1854. In 1853 he was converted to Christianity by Dr. (afterwards Sir John) Login, who was the superintendent of his establishment at Fatehgarh. Lord Dalhousie subsequently presented a Bible to him with the remarks:

> "To His Highness Maharaja Dalip Singh. This Holy Book, in which he has been led by God's grace to find an inheritance richer by far than all earthly kingdoms, is presented with sincere respect and regard by his faithful friend[1] Dalhousie, April 5, 1854."

In March 1854 Dalip Singh left India for England. After some time the estate of Hatherop in Gloucestershire was purchased for him by the India Office at the cost of £185,000. The entire amount invested was debited to the Maharaja's account. However, Dalip Singh found the estate unsuitable. Then with the consent of the Government, which made an advance of £110,000, Dalip Singh purchased the estate of Elvedon in Suffolk, which he held till his death. The above two deals brought the Maharaja under a heavy debt, which was subsequently the cause of his great financial worries.

In 1860 he came to India and stayed at Spence's Hotel in Calcutta waiting for his mother Rani Jindan to come from Nepal, join him and proceed to England. He

1. But this faithful friend was alluded to by the Maharaja later on as "the late unmitigated scoundrel the Marquess of Dalhousie." *Lady Login's Recollections*, P. 268.

had great affection for his mother and was never satisfied till he persuaded her to live with him in England. At this time he was "anxious to go up country and pose in the Punjab as the exiled monarch returned for a space to gladden the eyes of his bereaved people; but Lord Canning had no wish for more rebellion than he had already suppressed. So the triumphal progress was prohibited, and the Maharaja proceeded no further than Calcutta.[1]"

In 1864 Rani Jindan died and in accordance with her last wishes, Dalip Singh took his mother's remains to India and immersed them into the sacred river, the Narbada.

On his way back to England, he met in Egypt a German lady, the daughter of a merchant in Alexandria. He married her and had several children by her. Maharani Bomba, for that was her name, died in 1887 and after that he married an English lady, Ada Douglas Wetherill by name, who survived him.

In the earlier years of his stay abroad the Maharaja seems to be loyal to Her Majesty the Queen Victoria and enthusiastic about his new faith. Anyhow, that is the impression one gets from his remarks to Dr. Leitner in 1869 that he was prepared to subscribe a thousand rupees annually to the Punjab University (then under contemplation), "provided the Bible was taught in it" "in order to spread the gospel among his benighted fellow countrymen.[2]" During this period he is said to be the picture of an English country-gentleman, interested in game and sport.

Gradually, a sense of disillusionment began to get over him. What gave the start to the process was his financial difficulties. His allowance was first fixed at £ 12000[3] per annum. It was increased to £ 15000 in

1. *Asiatic Quarterly*, 1894—article by L. Griffin.
2. Ibid.
3. According to the exchange ratio of those days £ 10,000 was equal to one lakh rupees.

1856 when he was 18 years old. Later on in 1862 it was raised to £ 25000. Still, it was insufficient. The extravagant habits of the Maharaja were blamed for this by the India Office. But that was not the whole truth. From the very beginning, as we have seen above, his estates were encumbered by the enormous sums lent by the Government for their purchase. They had to be reimbursed and every year a good slice of the Maharaja's allowance was taken away in part payment of the advances plus the heavy interest on them.

His affairs reached a crisis in 1880 when they were thoroughly examined by the Government and to pay off his debts further sums were advanced on the condition that the estates would not be considered hereditary, but would be sold at his death. This was greatly resented by Dalip Singh. He consulted lawyers as to the possibility of filing a suit against the Government. Soon after, a book of grievances was printed. He claimed that he had not been treated fairly in the matter of the annual pension. He was paid much less than what was promised to him by the treaty of 1849. He challenged the interpretation put upon it by the India Office as being contrary to the one in which he had been brought up, and he demanded arbitration on this question. He wanted that all the lapses on the deaths of his pensioner relatives and servants should be credited to him. Further, he wanted that his pension should be treated as hereditary. The Government took a narrow legalistic view of the matter and rejected all his claims and requests outright. He then raked up the issue of inheritance of the personal private property of his father. Here, too, he met with little success. His continued disappointment with the India Office led him to question the very validity of the Second Treaty of Lahore, 1849. It was declared by him and his advisers to be "a high-handed act of power, exercised for the exclusive benefit of the stronger party against the weaker, without any justification from

any treaty or right created by international law." The Maharaja's view of the treaty was regarded as valid by the Logins and many others, but it was no better than mere outpouring of a disgruntled mind to the India Office who dismissed the whole thing with an arrogant sneer. In the words of Mr. L. Griffin, "the Government contention was legal, but ungenerous and short-sighted," so that "naturally Dalip Singh was dissatisfied." The India Office stood condemned by its "unsympathetic attitude" towards him[1].

But every cloud has a silver lining. The difficulties and hardships of the Maharaja turned him into a patriot. He now thought of his country and fellow-countrymen and felt pained over the long distance that separated him from them. He began to brood over his country's ills, besides his own, and was prepared to throw off his allegiance to England and make common cause with her enemies, to renounce Christianity and to appeal to the Sikhs as their leader and king. "His Majesty Dalip Singh was after this openly talked of at the Northbrook Club with the same spirit as that in which Jacobites used to toast the pretender over the water," writes[2] Griffin. Dr. Leitner[3] took a serious view of it and in 1884 "reprimanded certain Punjabi students who would call on "His Majesty the Maharaja Dalip Singh" instead of studying and who joined a meeting at an Indian Club at which it was announced that he would invade the Punjab next year with a Russian Army."

The new mood of Dalip Singh caused as well a few ripples in the seemingly placid waters of the Punjab's political life. Many strange faces from the Punjab appeared in London. Among them was Sardar Thakur Singh, the eldest surviving member of the Sandhanwalia family from which Maharaja Ranjit Singh had sprung. He had sent some presents and a complimentary letter

1. *Asiatic Quarterly*, 1894.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. He was the Principal of the Government College, Lahore.

All this information has been taken from the *Asiatic Quarterly*, 1894.

to Dalip Singh through Dr. Leitner as early as 1869. He welcomed the newly arisen patriotic sentiments of the Maharaja and wished to be by his side at this fateful hour. The Sikh peasants of the Punjab felt greatly moved by the rumours in the air. A party of them, when on a visit to Lahore in 1885 in connection with a case at the Chief Court, actually enquired of Dr. Leitner as to "when Dalip Singh was coming to the Punjab and were sure that in that event taxes and cow-killing would be abolished[1]." "The native papers as a rule sympathised with him (Dalip Singh), for he had grievances and a name," remarks Dr. Leitner[2]. The relevant extracts from the Indian papers were published in the Civil and Military Gazette of 1885.

In his new patriotic mood, Dalip Singh felt ashamed of his having foolishly forsaken the religious creed of his ancestors. Finally, in 1884 he decided to shift over to Sikhism. In that year he got a family priest from India to teach him the Sikh faith and wrote a letter to a Parsi friend of his, Manockjee Cursetjee, to inform him about "his change of creed from Christianity to Sikhism for the reason that Christianity was the religion of robbers and plunderers and violators of solemn engagements[3]."

At last in 1886 the Maharaja determined to go himself to India and set himself at the head of his faithful subjects. His declared object in so doing was to undergo the rites of reinitiation as a Sikh. Writing on the 7th October 1885 to his relative Sant Singh, he made it clear that he wanted to leave England, as the British Government had refused to do him justice and wished to take up his residence quietly at Delhi, for he was poor then. But the Government knew him better. When consulted on the matter, Mr. Griffin advised the Secretary of State against allowing him to leave England. He told him that "Dalip Singh was ready for any mischief and

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

that it was inexpedient to allow him to leave England: that the Sikhs did not care two straws about him, but they were an excitable race; that no one could calculate what might be the force of national sentiment and that only madmen took lighted candle into powder magazines[1]". The Secretary of State was unable to accept this advice, because under the law of England Dalip Singh could not be prevented from leaving the country. However, he was confident that in the event of any unfavourable repercussions in India, the Maharaja could be prevented by the Government of India from entering India or any part thereof.

Dalip Singh reached Aden on the way home in April 1886. Here he was detained, because already there was some commotion in the Punjab raised by the tidings of his return to the motherland. In this situation the loyalist Sikhs—chiefs, Singh Sabhaites and many others—found a much-sought-after opportunity to prove their fidelity to the Government once again. The official action was promptly endorsed. Rather, they offered their support in advance, saying that the return of the Maharaja to India would be a source of great danger and needed to be stopped forthwith. So far as the Maharaja's restricted object of getting the Sikh pahul (baptism) is concerned, he had his wish fulfilled, for the necessary arrangements for the ceremony were made at Aden. The Maharaja stayed for some time at this place, but unfortunately fell ill and suffered a serious setback in health.

The Maharaja left Aden for Marseilles on 3rd June 1886. He was now a much bitterer man. The recent action of the Government had accentuated his hostility to the British. He "vowed an implacable hatred to the Viceroys, Governors, Ministers and high Dignitaries generally of India and England[2]." A clear indication of this is provided in the following telegram which appeared in the Times of July 5, 1886[3]:

1. *Asiatic Quarterly*, 1894. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid.

"The Maharaja Dhuleep Singh has written an extraordinary letter to the Times of India. He begins by saying that before quitting England the Indian Government offered him £ 50,000[1], provided that he promised never to return to India. He declined adding that he would not accept £ 500,000. His health having broken down owing to his residence at Aden, he is going back to drink the German waters. But although prevented from reaching Bombay, he goes on to say, other roads remain. When he returns, he can land at Goa or Pondicherry or enter the Punjab through Russia.

"In the latter event he supposes that the whole Indian army would be sent to resist him. The Indian tax-payers, he adds, will be glad to hear that he has resigned the miserable stipend paid under the iniquitous treaty of annexation. When restored to health he hopes to appeal for pecuniary aid to the oriental liberality of his brother princes and of the people of India. If, however, this Government should veto their generous impulses, he will transfer his allegiance to some other European Power, which will doubtless provide him with maintenance."

After the Aden incident the Maharaja refused to go back to England. He would rather have a public sale of his jewels at Paris than go back to England and throw himself at the mercy of the British Government. "Outraged in his tenderest point and furious at the insult put on him," writes Lady Login, "the Maharaja threw in the face of the Government the pension he had hitherto drawn, left his wife and family in their hands to support, abjured his allegiance and announced his intention of offering his sword and his services to the Emperor of Russia[2]."

1. According to Lady Login, the offer was made by the Secretary of State through Col. Sir Owen Burne. It was a sort of hush money, at best a consolation prize. *Lady Login's Recollections*, published in London, 1916, P. 257.

2. *Lady Login's Recollections*, P. 258.

After spending some months in France he went to Germany and from there to Russia where he was accorded a "benevolent reception." The Russians were not unfamiliar with the Maharaja's name. As a matter of fact, they had been regretting all the time that "he was such a good Christian, as he was thereby utterly lost to the Russian objects among the Sikhs." We have it on record that when the Maharaja was at the Strasburg railway station in 1876, a party of Russian officers rushed in eagerly discussing Indian affairs and would have contacted the Maharaja but for the presence there of Dr. Leitner.

He reached Russia in the beginning of 1887. From Russia he wrote several letters to his friends. Of them, two letters addressed to a French friend of his appeared in the Times of Monday, January 9, 1888. They are significant in so far as they furnish an idea of Dalip Singh's future plans and of the Russian response to them. One of these letters is reproduced below in full[1]:

Hotel Billo, Moscow, October 28th, 1887.

Monsieur le Comte—I have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 14th instant and return you my best thanks for it. It is very pleasing to make the acquaintance of one who hates the English as much as I do. I much regret to inform you that the President of your Great Republic did not behave courteously towards me, as M. Grevy has not up to the present sent me a reply to a letter I addressed asking for French protection, so as to enable me to reside at Pondicherry, some months before I quit Paris.

But that now matters very little, as my destiny has brought me to the feet of my Sovereign the Emperor of Russia, whom I am prepared to serve with my life, should he ever desire to employ me in his service. Thanking you from my heart for your kind sympathy towards my

1. *Asiatic Quarterly*, 1894.

countrymen, whom I hope one of these days to deliver as predicted of me[1] in a prophecy written in the year 1725 by the last religious teacher of the Sikhs.

I remain your faithful Dalip Singh, Sovereign of the Sikh nation and proud, implacable foe of England.

The second letter written on November 4, 1887 was entirely of a personal nature. It reflects, in some slight way, the behaviour of the Maharaja towards his friends. More important than that is the fact that it ends in exactly the same manner as the letter given above.

Sometime after his arrival in Russia, Dalip Singh issued a proclamation, which appeared later on in the Times of August 5, 1889. The proclamation denounced by his opponents as the "seditious proclamation" is really a monument of his patriotism. The Times' summary of it was as follows :

"An appeal by the Maharaja Dhuleep Singh of an extraordinary character, addressed to the natives of India, is published in the Press. In prevision of the future and as his Royal decree he demands a monthly subscription of one pice from each of the 250,000,000 but from each in the Punjab one anna. The public debt of India is (in this document) repudiated; the payment of taxes is forbidden, cow-killing is prohibited, prisoners are to be released, and all persons who have suffered tyranny and injustice, caused by the British Government, are to be reinstated in their rights. He purposes entering India with a European army with the material support of Russia[2]."

The appeal of the Maharaja failed to evoke any favourable response from the Sikhs, much less from others, with the notable exception of the Kukas. In place of a promise of help an indignant disclaimer was received by Dalip Singh, in which the Khalsa as represented by the

1. A seeming indication of Kuka influence on him.
2. *Asiatic Quarterly*, 1894.

Sikh chiefs and the Singh Sabha leaders bluntly told him that they would extend no help to him in his foolish rebellion against the British Government.

Dalip Singh stayed in Russia till November 1888 and continued his efforts for the Russian aid. But the prospects of success retreated farther and farther away. He never wholly recovered from the shock of the so-called Khalsa Panth's disclaimer. Moreover, the Russian eagerness to help him was seriously affected by the refusal of the Sikh leadership to help him. It may also be that after the boundary settlement of 1887 the Russian moves against England were somewhat soft-pedalled. Thus in great disappointment the Maharaja had to leave Russia for Paris. Soon after he had an attack of paralysis, which compelled him to spend the remainder of his life in France. He died on 22nd October 1893 at the Hotel de la Tremouville (Paris). He suddenly succumbed to the effects of a hemiplegia. Four days later the dead body of the Maharaja was taken to England by his widow Maharani Ada and his children for burial at Elvedon.

Shortly before his death Dalip Singh happened to meet Dr. Leitner at the Hotel de Choiseul in Paris. At that time he moved with difficulty and seemed very contrite, says Leitner. But without mincing any words he said to his Christian friend: "I have left your God. He has humbled me to the dust, I praise his holy name. I was never so happy as when I lived on a few francs at a Russian hotel[1]." On Leitner's authority we have it that the Maharaja during his talk with him made numerous Biblical allusions, but he never implied that he had left Sikhism.

However, another friend of the Maharaja, namely Baron Texter de Ravisi mentions that towards the end he re-embraced Christianity in its Anglican State-form. The Earl of Leven, who went to meet him during his illness at Paris, also gives a similar impression. It is

1. Ibid.

possible that under the terrible mental burden of disillusionment with his fellow-countrymen, his mind might have given way and in a wave of frustration he might have decided to go back to Christianity. It is also possible that after his death his friend Baron Texter, for some mundane and discreet reasons connected with the future well-being of his widow and children, might have given out that he had re-entered the fold of Christianity and expressed "the most profound loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen Victoria and veneration for the Prince of Wales." Anyway, it is a matter for further examination.

One thing is clear, however, that at the time of his death the Maharaja wore an uncut beard. Another thing that may be useful to remember in this connection is the distinction he often used to make between Englishmen as individuals and Englishmen as a nation. His friend Baron Texter writes[1]: "He naively confessed his astonishment that men, who had such great personal qualities, could as a nation be so thoroughly selfish and pitiless to others." His relations with Queen Victoria were always cordial. He never said a harsh word about her. During his paralytic attack at Paris he did write to her a very sweet letter. Another sweet letter he wrote at that time to Lady Login whom he had informed only a little earlier that if he met any of her relatives on the battlefield, he would shoot him without any hesitation. But how to interpret these letters is another problem requiring to be examined. Is the feeling of regret expressed in them an indication of his admission that all his grievances and patriotic moves had been misconceived ? Or is it merely the courtesy expression of an ailing man ? The latter seems the more probable, because thereafter he never went to England. Between his paralytic attack and death there was a gap of three years. These letters were written soon after the paralytic attack in 1890. He could have returned to England, had he so wished. But he did not. Why ? Illness alone is a poor explanation for not doing so, for

1. Ibid.

he could be carried, in case he could not go himself. And then he also had a recovery from the illness for some time. Related to this, there is another question to be answered : how far could we, on the basis of these letters, go in inferring the forsaking by him of his chosen ancestral religion, Sikhism.

Some links of the Maharaja with the Kukas have been brought to light in Chapter VIII. It will be useful to mention one more of such links. Before he left England in 1886, a Kuka, Banarsi Das by name, proceeded there and met him. The Maharaja was so much impressed by him that he adopted him as his guru (guide and leader). Banarsi Das, on his return to India, actively engaged himself in doing propaganda for Dalip Singh. Banarsi Das was a man of great personality and influence and was well known in the cities of northern India. His activities were first reported by the Calcutta Police in 1887.[1]

1. Proceedings of the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Secret-I, October 1887.

APPENDIX II*

SOME PRO-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIONS

No. 3422, dated the 22nd October 1872.

From : L. GRIFFIN, Esqr., Officiating Secretary to the Government of the Punjab.

To : H.L. DAMPIER, Esqr., Officiating Secretary to the Government of India.

I am desired by the Hon'ble the Lieutenant Governor to forward, in original, a letter dated 28th August from the Revd. B. Golaknath of Jalandhar, with its accompanying vernacular petitions against the removal of T.D. Forsyth, Esquire, C.B., which it has been requested may be submitted to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council. Translations of the petitions are also enclosed.

2. The case to which the accompanying memorials have reference having been authoritatively decided by the Government of India and Her Majesty's Secretary of State, the Lieutenant Governor hesitated to send on these papers with special reference to the orders conveyed in your letters No. 386-G dated 4th April 1872 and No. 820-G dated 25th April 1872 in the case of Lieutenant R. Bartholomew; but as His Honor still holds that in a case of importance which had been decided, not by him but by the Government of India, he has no option, in simple justice to the officer concerned, but to send on the petitions without comment of his own for such consideration as the Government of India may think them deserving, and this procedure, which is covered by the discretion left in the instructions convey-

* Home Judicial (A), January 1873, Progs. Nos. 124-146.

ed in your letter of the 25th April, the Lieutenant Governor would feel constrained to follow in similar cases which had been decided by the Supreme Government.

Dated Jalandhar the 28th August 1872.

From : The Rev. B. GOLAKNATH,

To : L. GRIFFIN, Esqr., Officiating Secretary to the Government of the Punjab.

In May last a meeting of several Native gentlemen of this place and elsewhere was held here, and Sirdar Bikrama Singh, Bahadur, Ahluwalia, was called to the chair. The object of the meeting was to memorialize the Government of India to reconsider its late orders removing Mr. T.D. Forsyth, late Commissioner and Superintendent, Ambala, from the Punjab to Oudh for the part he had taken in the execution of Kukas at Kotla in January last.

While the members of the meeting acknowledged with gratitude the kindly interest and paternal care which has always been taken by their rulers in the welfare of the people, they could not but feel that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, however legally just the decision may be, its effects upon the population at large, especially the discontented and ill-disposed, would be very injurious and productive of evil consequences.

On the other hand, most of the members of the meeting being well acquainted with the real character and designs of the Kukas, and seeing that they were daily increasing in number till they received the blow so well merited by them at Kotla, it was with much regret that the meeting learnt from the late orders that the officers who had in good faith done their duty in checking the career of a rebellious sect, whose avowed intention was the overthrow of British rule in the Punjab, had been punished, and thus disgraced before the whole country.

By the direction of the President and the meeting, I have now taken the liberty of forwarding herewith

vernacular petitions accompanied by the signatures of those who have united with the meeting held here, and have to request the favour of your being kind enough to lay the same before the Hon'ble the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, with a view to their being submitted for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor General of India in Council.

To the Hon'ble the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOR ! We, the subjects of Her Majesty the Queen, most respectfully beg to appeal, on the grounds noted below, to our just Government, and particularly Lord Northbrook, against an order recently passed by the Government of India, whereby Mr. Cowan has been dismissed the service, and Mr. Forsyth, Commissioner of Ambala, has been transferred to a Commissionership in Oudh, and pray that the order in question be cancelled.

It is not a hidden fact to the experienced officers of Government that the Kuka sect never wished that the British administration should continually enjoy tranquillity, which is evident from the way they conducted themselves; they assembled in large numbers at fairs on pretence of celebrating the festivals, and raised religious disputes in such places; they appointed armed Subas at different places; they established their private post; they sang (seditious) verses as the follows :

"Khalsahji ka Raj hosi,
Unke agge rahe na kosee;"
(The Khalsahji will rule,
Before the Khalsa no one will remain);

and they spoke ill of the Government intentions at their own places. It was on such considerations that Government always kept an eye on them when they went to any fairs. In the beginning they attacked the Govern-

ment intentions by a stratagem, and then, as lookers-on, kept silent to see how far would the judicial proceedings get them in. All the Raises of Amritsar were brought under difficulties, on their account, for a long time. At last, when it was proved that the crime was committed by the Kukas, all the members of the sect were not implicated, but only a few of them were arrested. They, then taking the religious provocation of kine-slaughter in hand, by which they hoped to excite every Hindu, attacked the persons who had given assistance to Government in the first case, and raised a disturbance. By holding up their head in this way, they tested the administrative power of Government a second; and we fully think that, if they were not punished according to the gravity of the crime, our property, honour, and lives would have been exposed to greater danger than that of the Amritsar people in the previous case. But as Mr. Forsyth was an experienced officer, and was acquainted with the character of the people well, he understood these apprehensions; and as he was present at the place where the second catastrophe occurred, he blew the criminal Kuka party from the mouth of the cannon, and thus defeated the courage of a large number of the members of the sect in the Punjab, who were anxiously looking out for the result. By thus checking them in the commencement, the fire which was to set the whole of Punjab on conflagration was suppressed. Thus, considering the above facts, we, who understand the usages of our country well, when we compare the action taken by Mr. Forsyth with our custom, find that the measures adopted have been the cause of protecting our honour. And as for his services to Government and doing good to the people, Mr. Forsyth has been condemned, we, leaving out the question of esteem and gratitude we feel for and owe to that just officer, beg to be permitted to express our grief and regret for the censure he has received for his exerting himself for the good of the public. Apart from a consideration of the previous praiseworthy services

of Mr. Forsyth, we have a further ground to urge for the granting of our appeal by Government, that no one considered the present services of that officer through a Native point of view, and the Government was passed on an error detected in papers of the case.

We sign our names on a separate paper. Signatures of the separate paper referred to :

Harnam Singh, Ahluwalia,
Bikram Singh, Ahluwalia,
Sochet Singh, Ahluwalia,
Golaknath, Missionary,

and 437 others, Jagirdars, Members of Municipal Committees, Zaildars, Sahukars, etc., of different towns and villages.

———

To the Hon'ble the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOR ! It is evident that our kind Government has, through great benevolence, allowed liberty to all its subjects, and especially to the writers of newspapers, with a view that, if they may observe any defect in the administration of the country, or find fault with any State orders concerning the people, they may without fear express their views and objections with reference thereto, in order that by such means the Government may be made acquainted with such defects, and take steps to remedy them. Many objections were raised by editors of newspapers with respect to the orders passed by Government in the late Kuka case; and as we, Raises and subjects of Government, have stronger claims to enjoy such a liberty than the newspaper writers, in order that, when we may observe any defect in connection with any question concerning our country, we may with sincere faith represent the matter to Government. As the objections raised by the newspaper writers against the Government orders in the

Kuka case are sound and proper in our opinion, a committee was formed by the people whose names appear according to the districts at the end, with a view to draw up a petition to Government, and they unanimously came to the conclusion that the Government orders passed in that case really require reconsideration, and that consequently it was necessary to make a representation to the Government on the subject; for we understand the affairs of the country far better than any other class. It has been already admitted in Parliament. The rebellious and mutinous conduct of the Kukas, who pretended to be votaries and worshippers of the Deity, was not viewed in its true light as it ought to have been, nor was due attention given to the reports of experienced officers. It was the belief of the natives of Hindustan, as well as the Punjab generally, that the Kukas, ever since the sect came into existence, had for their real object the acquisition of temporal sovereignty of the country, and that its members were chiefly disloyal. They were not believed to be disinterested *fakirs* or worshippers of the true God. They used strong arguments in support of their creed, which cannot be related for fear of the petition becoming prolix, but one or two will be mentioned to show their nature. The policy of the Kuka sect is based on self-interest and acquiring possession of territory; ostensively they prohibit drinking spirits, and forbid stealing and lying, but in reality they follow a system which resembles an administrative policy; for they had appointed a Subah and Assistant Subah at the head of every *lakh* of Kukas, and had appointed others as officers on the military system, and every Subah submitted daily reports to Guru Ram Singh. If by adversity of circumstances any members of the sect became indigent, they were helped by contributions by their co-religionists —store-houses were erected at the village of Bheni, and arrangements for keeping them well furnished were commenced. The Kukas acknowledge ten *Gurus*, or spiritual leaders, called Badshahs (emperors),

who have passed away, and some of them having had predicted that an eleventh Guru would be born somewhere near the River Sutlej, when every one would acknowledge the supremacy of the *Khalsa*, the hopes of the Sikhs revived when they observed Ram Singh, the founder of the Kuka sect, come forward, and they considered that he was the same eleventh Guru who was to come to the world as the last, and they believed that their authority and religion would be extended everywhere, and that all the other religions would be swept away from the face of the world. They have many compilations extant on this subject—one of their sayings being "thare masitan dhae kai karo maidanah" (demolish the altars and mosques, and level them with the ground). The Kukas pulled down many religious buildings to carry out the meaning of the verse, and there will be found files of many such cases brought against them in several districts, and especially in the District of Ludhiana.

Now of the facts : From some time back they commenced collecting in numbers at large fairs; and as the Government looked to their conduct with lenity, they openly made preparations for revolting and raising disturbance. In the first place, to induce the people of other religions (with the exception of Muhammadans and Englishmen—Christians) who abhor slaughter of kine to join them, they took on themselves the task of murdering butchers. Subah Giani Singh was appointed by Guru Ram Singh as commanding officer to execute the murder of the butchers, and, on his being arrested and hung, he declared vehemently that his death would be avenged, and that the people would see what would come to pass shortly. His followers declared that they were resolved to avenge his death; and, although it was given out that they were mad, and Ram Singh had made a report of their excited condition, he gave injunctions to all the Kukas through the Subahs to be ready for the

contemplated time; and this has been proved. The attack contemplated by them was resolved on account of the leaving by chance of the Maharaja of Patiala to Delhi, the headless state of the Riasat of Maler Kotlah, its chief having died, and the recent installation of the Rajah of Nabha. They had a consultation among themselves to the effect that they should first overpower the State of Maler Kotlah, and securing arms, horses, etc., from that principality, take hold of the Patiala Fort of Thadali (?) and then suddenly attack the Riasat of Nabha. They first attacked the Maloud Estate, and then fell on Maler Kotlah; but, had they not been arrested there, their co-religionists would have flown to their assistance from all directions on hearing of their attacking that State; but, owing to the good management of Mr. Cowan, who exerted himself in collecting the troops of the neighbouring chiefs and in summoning the British *Fauj*, and on account of the coming to the place of Mr. Forsyth, they were checked.

Replies extracts from newspapers to the strictures of the Government

The Kuka disturbance occurred at two places—first in the dependent chiefship of Maloud, and the insurgents arrested at that place were tried according to law by the Sessions Judge, and a report was submitted by that officer to the Sadar Court on the subject, and there was nothing done which was illegal. The second disturbance took place in the independent State of Maler Kotlah, and the arrests of the Kukas concerned were made in the Patiala territory, also an independent chiefship. Leaving all this out of question, Mr. Cowan would himself have been murdered, had he not been rescued. The insurgents were to be punished according to the practice of punishing of capital offenders current in the Riasat, and it is this—that when the chief for the time being having investigated the guilt, considers the criminal to be liable to

suffer capital punishment, he refers the case to the Agent (Cis-Sutlej States) at Ambala for confirmation of sentence of death, and the Agent sanctions the sentence of the Rais in accordance with the spirit of letter No. 2322, dated 7th October 1847, from the Secretary to the Government of India, and letter No. 1110, dated 23rd September 1870, and gives permission for the hanging, etc., of the criminal. The Agent need not make a report of such cases to the Sadar authorities; neither is there an order that a criminal sentenced to death should only be hanged, and not blown from the mouth of a cannon ; nor is it directed that the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Act XXV (of 1816) are to be observed within the boundaries of the States, except so far that the chiefs connected with the Ambala Agency are strictly prohibited to mutilate any criminal. When the criminals concerned in the affair were arrested, Mr. Cowan acted according to the powers conferred on him by the rules and practice current in the state, which he was bound to observe, that is, when the officials of the Riasat where the disturbance occurred, and the other States, were all of opinion that the insurgents should be blown from the gun, he wrote a letter to the Commissioner and did as was resolved. Although the criminals were blown from the cannon's mouth before the sanction arrived, but, according to the law of the State, they had power to act as they thought fit according to circumstances, and consequently their proceeding is not open to objection.

The crime of the Kukas was punishable with death, and there has been no order issued in the State not to blow criminals from the cannon's mouth; and as this kind of punishment is more suitable for setting example to others, this mode of punishment was adopted in accordance with the opinion of the Riasat authorities. The Rajah of Jind had, in 1854, blown away two villages for their throwing off their allegiance, murdering a Tahsil-

dar, and setting fire to an office building. The actions taken by the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner in the case were *bona fide,* and were based on the welfare of the people and the benefit of the administration. In such cases of rebellion, which injure the administration, the niceties of law are not taken into consideration. The frontier affairs of the Peshawar Division, Kohat, and Derajat must be taken into consideration, where law is not admitted. During the mutinies of 1857 four or five troopers had first entered Delhi ; had they been apprehended and blown from the cannon's mouth, the affairs of those days, perhaps, would not have spread so widely as they did. The Kuka disturbance was of the nature of the rebellion of 1857, and, had there been a little more delay in checking it, the confusion would have been terrible. We understand that the office of Mr. Forsyth in the suppression of this disturbance was that of a general, and all that he did was not against the rules of the agency, but only this, that he did not make a report to the Sadar Court, which, according to the rule laid down in the letters quoted above, was not necessary, and it was feared that in the case of delay a gang of Kukas might come to the aid of their brethren and forcibly effect their release, or that disturbance would have occurred in other parts of the country.

On the management of affairs in this way, the members of the Kuka sect were so much terrified that it was hoped that no one would ever raise his head again. Many of the followers of the sect disavowed the creed. But when Mr. Cowan was transferred, the lifeless Kukaism revived again, and the members of the sect asserted that all this had happened for the sake of their prosperity, and stated that what had occurred was a miracle wrought by their Guru, who, though he was suffering under difficulties, would triumph in the end as the spiritual leaders of the former ages had been. They are now collecting money by contributions for securing the

release of Ram Singh, their Guru, and are looking out for a good Subah.

We have stated above that the Kukas aspire the possession of the country; and if the orders passed with respect of Mr. Cowan and Mr. Forsyth are not modified, we apprehend danger, as the administrative authority having been thus weakened, the rebellious characters are encouraged to have recourse to mischief. Granted that both these officers erred against law in taking the action they did, but, God forbid, this was not done for any self-interest or from partiality to any one.

We, the subjects of Government, have not come forward as partial to any party or in any self-interested manner, but we respectfully and with joined hands pray that the benign Government be pleased to revise and cancel the orders passed in the case, and thus make us, well-wishers, happy.

The signatures of the petitioners are attached to separate papers filed with the petition.

Enclosures

Mr. Forsyth, Commissioner of the Ambala Division, and Mr. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, adopted laudable and wise measures for the suppression of the mischief and disturbance caused by the Kukas, and awarded exemplary punishment to that reckless sect; and it is owing to this really good management that we have been relieved of the apprehension of their evil intentions and desires to take hold of the country, and have become safe and secure. Although these officers deserved praise for the measures taken by them, but, on the contrary, orders expressing displeasure and raising objections against their action were passed, which have been the cause of our apprehending many fears to the injury of the administration, and which have revived that rebellious sect which was almost extinct, and gave them an opportunity of entertaining hopes for prosperity

and have thrown us in an uncertain state against their ill designs. We have, therefore, drawn a petition in which we have given full grounds, and have sent it by Kazi Mubarak Ali to the Committee which has been formed in the Jalandhar District, with a view that it may be transmitted to Government for a consideration of our prayer. Having sent this petition to Government, we pray that the case be reconsidered and the petitioners be obliged.

SARDAR BISHAN SINGH,
Dated the 28th June 1872. RAIS OF KALSIAH.

OWING to the wise measures adopted by Mr. Forsyth, Commissioner of Ambala and Mr. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, for the suppression of the mischief and disturbance caused by the Kukas, and their awarding them exemplary punishment, order was fully restored in the country, and, being relieved from the apprehensions of their evil intentions and desires to take hold of territory, we became safe and secure. These officers deserved praise from Government for the measures taken by them; for what they had done they did with good intentions; but, on the contrary, orders expressing displeasure and condemning their actions were passed against them, which have been the cause of reviving the Kuka sect, which had been almost swept off the face of the earth, and have given them fresh hopes of waiting for their time. As this order is injurious to the interests of the administration, and fears of different kinds are apprehended if it be not set aside, we, the people of the whole of Punjab and the subjects of Government, have formed a Committee in the Jalandhar District for forwarding our representations in this respect to Government, and, forming an exhaustive petition, beg to forward it to Government with a prayer that the orders in question be modified. In sending this petition, we, the Raises and people of the Karnal District, beg to state that we entirely concur in the views of the Jalandhar Committee.

Nawab Shamsher Ali Khan, Istamrardar of Karnal.

,, Muhammad Ali Khan, Bahadur, Rais and Istamrardar of Karnal.

,, Mihr Ilahi Khan, Istamrardar and Rais of Karnal.

,, Karm Ilahi Khan, Istamrardar of Karnal.

,, Akbar Khan, son of Nawab Gholam Sharf Khan, Bahadur, Istamrardar and Rais of Karnal.

,, Nijbat Ali Khan, Istamrardar of Karnal.

,, Kamaruddin Khan, Istamrardar and Rais of Karnal.

Nandu Mal, Member, Municipal Committee, and Rais of Karnal.

Narain Das, Member, Municipal Committee, and Rais of Karnal.

Duarka Das, Sahukar of Karnal.

Jawahar Singh, Sahukar of Karnal.

Lala Makhan Mal, Member, Municipal Committee, and Rais of Karnal.

Jugal Kishore, Kanungo of Karnal.

Syad Mir Ali, Rais of Karnal.

Syad Wazir Ali, Rais and Member of Municipal Committee of Karnal.

Syad Muhammad Hasan, Rais of Karnal.

Syad Inayat Ali, Rais of Karnal.

Sheodial Singh, Member of Municipal Committee and Rais of Karnal.

Syad Hashmat Ali, Zamindar of Jalhar, in the Karnal District.

Bhola Nath, Mahajan, Rais of Karnal.

Another paper, in the same words as the last, from the following Native gentlemen of the Jagadhri Tehsil Ilaka :

Bansilal, Banker and Rais of Jagadhri.

Lala Devi Chund, ditto.
,, Baldeo Singh, ditto.
,, Parkanth Rai, ditto.
,, Jagadhar Mal, ditto.
,, Ramdhari Mal, Sahukar of Jagadhri.
,, Kewal Mal, Chaudhri of Jagadhri.
,, Dania Lal, Sahukar of ditto.
,, Jamna Dass, ditto.

Lala Bali Mal, Chaudhri of Jagadhri
,, Kashmiri Das, Chaudhri of ditto.
,, Shadi Ram, Chaudhri of ditto.
,, Nannu Mal, Member, Municipal Committee of Jagadhri.
,, Kewal Ram, Sahukar of Jagadhri.
,, Waziri Mal, ditto ditto.
,, Shankar Das, Chaudhri of ditto.
,, Dwarka Mal, Sahukar of ditto.
,, Baldeo Das ditto.
,, Sita Ram, ditto.
,, Lekhraj, ditto.
,, Raja Ram, Chaudhri of Jagadhri.
,, Nathan Mal ditto.
,, Gopal Sahai, Sahukar of ditto.
,, Sawai, ditto.
,, Bhagwan Das, ditto.

Kewal Ram, Zamindar of ditto.

Lala Chuni Lal, Sahukar of ditto.
,, Nanak Chand, of ditto.
,, Bhagwan Das of ditto.
,, Banwari Das of Jagadhri.
,, Mulraj, ditto.
,, Bansi Lal, Chaudhri of ditto
,, Ram Surn, ditto.
,, Chuni Lal, ditto.
,, Hira Lal, Sahukar of ditto.
,, Ramjidas, ditto.

,, Chuni Lal, son of Lala Nathan, Sahukar of Jagadhri
,, Sigapol, Sahukar of Jagadhri.
,, Harsahai Mal, ditto
,, Nahr Singh, of ditto.
,, Zahru Mal, Sahukar of ditto.
,, Ramjidas, ditto.
Lala Chhatar Mal, Sahukar of Jagadhri.
,, Ramjidas, of ditto.
Gulab Singh Jagirdar.
Lala Thakur Das, Sahukar of Jagadhri.
,, Bihari Lal, ditto.
,, Ramjidas, ditto.
,, Murli Lal, ditto.
Jamna Das, Sahukar of Balaspur,
Chhajju Mal, Lambardar of Karerah.
Murtaza Khan, Lambardar of Balaspur.
Jiwan Mal, Sahukar of Jagadhri.
Malkhan, of Saran.
Sohda, Lambardar of Katrah Kalan.
Mallan, of Kaheri.
Talab, of ditto.
Najab Khan, Lambardar
Ali Bakhsh, ditto.
Mardan, ditto.
Nabi Bakhsh.
Mathra Das, Chaudhri of Mustafabad,
Lala Ghasi Ram, ditto
,, Daulat Ram, ditto.
,, Chuni Lal, ditto.
Sardar Tilok Singh, Rais of ditto.
,, Sundar Singh ditto.
,, Gursam Singh, ditto.
Ahmad Sabar, Lambardar, ditto.
Nabi Bakhsh, Lambardar of Mustafabad.
Lala Chuni Lal, of ditto.
Mahtab Singh, of Khanpur.
Ali Bakhsh.

Mahanji, Lambardar.

Another similar petition signed by the following gentlemen of the town of Buria :

Sardar Jiwan Singh, Honorary Magistrate, Rais of Buria.
,, Gurbaksh Singh.
Hardit Singh, Rais of Dialgarh.
Mohan Lal,
Sawai Singh,
Lala Hardwari Mal, Sahukar of Buria,
,. Kundan Lal, ditto.
,, Dina Mal, ditto.
,, Zahoru Mal, ditto.
Bhawant, Chaudhri.
Thakur Das, Mahajan.
Kazi Zia-ud-din, Member, Municipal Committe.
Shambu Nath, Hakim.
Chhajju Singh.

Another petition, in the same words, signed by the following gentlemen :

Sardar Partab Singh, Machrauli.
,, Indar Singh, of Narwah Kalan.
,, Jai Singh, Changoli.
,, Santokh Singh, Jagirdar of Jagdholi.
Fateh Singh, Jagirdar.
Sant Singh, ditto of Saran.
Kirpal Singh ditto of ditto.
Iban (?) Singh, ditto.
Lehna Singh, ditto of Dharmkot.

Another petition, in the same words, from the following Native gentlemen of Ambala (District) :

Raja Bhagwan Singh, of Mani Majra.
,, Hira Singh, of Pabhat.
Sardar Khiwan Singh, of Moloha.
Fateh Singh, Jagirdar.
Punnu Mal, Chaudhri of Mani Majra.

Jawahar Lal, of Kuroli.
Kanshi Ram, ditto.
Kaka Mal, ditto.
Chuni, ditto.
Chuhr Singh, Lambardar.
Bhola Singh, ditto.
Khuda Baksh, ditto.
Kala Singh. ditto.
Chaudhri Vart Singh, ditto.
,, Takht Singh, ditto.
Hira Lal.
Deva Singh.
Kahn Singh.
Santu Mal.
Chaudhri Bahadur Singh.
,, Charat Singh.
,, Wazir Singh.
,, of Malakrah (?)
,, Sant Singh, Jagirdar.
Bishan Singh.
Isri, Lambardar of Salah.
Gulab Singh, of ditto.
Nand Singh, of ditto.
Ram Jas.
Sandal, Lambardar.
Charagha, ditto of Banur.
Madhu, ditto of Malu Majra.

To the Hon'ble the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOR ! We, the undersigned Rajas, Sardars and Raises of the Punjab, most respectfully beg to submit an appeal against an order with respect to Mr. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner, and Mr. Forsyth, Commissioner and pray that Your Honour be pleased to transmit our petition to the Supreme Government.

2. Many of us, perhaps, do not know Mr. Cowan or Mr. Forsyth; but since the occurrence of the disturbance by the Kukas, no one could be unaware of the particulars of their case. Our representation is based on the considerations of the future welfare of our country, and not on any self-interest; for when any sect raises disturbance in any country with a view to general rebellion, other tribes and respectable inhabitants also suffer, and are so much troubled and brought under difficulties that they cannot be remedied, and in such times the authorities consider that, although one party has held up their head against the State, but all must be punished.

3. It is not a long time that the Kukas murdered the butchers at Amritsar, when the Raises of that town were involved in great difficulties and troubles, and our benevolent Government must be aware of the intentions of the authorities that they had against them, and so we do not know what would have been done with the people of the whole of the Punjab owing to the rebellious conduct of the Kukas, had not the disturbances at Maloud and Maler Kotlah been speedily suppressed.

4. Our equitable and just Government considers that the punishment inflicted on the Kukas concerned in the Maloud and the Maler Kotlah disturbances was rash; but we beg to state that our country is situated on such a frontier where bloodshed always occurred, and as many savage tribes inhabit its borders, as well as the country, we do not consider the punishment to be severe at such times and on such an occasion, considering their manners, their character, and the practice followed during the rule of former Governments; for a punishment which puts stop to a thousand bloodshed and tends to continuance of order and tranquillity in the country, and protects the honour of the nobility, is not considered severe.

5. The conduct, the thoughts, and the manners of the Kukas are undoubtedly full of mischief and rebellious spirit, and there is no doubt that they would have caused

sometime such a great rebellion that the honour and the tranquillity of the country would have much suffered from it. We consider their conduct rebellious on the following grounds:

Firstly, they had appointed Subahs in different places, and their respective jurisdictions were defined, so much so that no one had authority within the jurisdiction of another Subah, and by this arrangement they could disturb the whole of the country by raising disturbance at any time; *secondly*, they kept their secrets in such a manner that they could not be known to the people of other religions, and their dak arrangements were made in the same manner as the Government post; *thirdly*, their number daily increased; so much so that although they numbered only hundreds in the beginning, they now number lakhs; *fourthly,* when they saw that their number came to lakhs, they commenced their religious movement in such a manner that all the Sikhs might be excited by the religious impulse. To effect this purpose they murdered the butchers at Amritsar, which is a religious place of all the Sikh Sardars, considering that by such of their religious action the hearts of the Sikhs will turn towards them and they will assist them, believing that the Kukas were fighting for a good cause; and *fifthly*, they sung the verse

"Khalsa ji ka raj hosi,
Unke agge rahe na kosi."
(The Khalsaji will rule,
No one will remain before them.)

6. After the Amritsar and Raikot events, when they thought that the religious feelings of all the Sikhs were excited, they openly rebelled, and made an attack on Maloud and Maler Kotlah. The attack was made at such a time when all the troops had gone to Delhi, and it was clear that in all parts of the country the Subahs, who had been appointed at different places to serve at such a time, would have raised their heads and excited

a general rebellion. But proper measures having been adopted soon, and the insurgents being sufficiently punished on the spot, the disturbance was suppressed, and the Government now considers it to have been a trifling matter.

7. There is no doubt that they could not have been able to do anything, had they come against Government even in a body of ten lakhs; but there is also no doubt that, had the disturbance spread and not severely dealt with at once, thousands of lives would have been lost.

8. We see that the Government has acknowledged in their decision the good intentions of these two officers, but we regret to state that, notwithstanding this, they have been severely punished, and the Kukas would think that the punishment has been inflicted through curse of their Guru and it is not well for the interests of the country that they should entertain such a belief.

9. The departure from the Punjab of Mr. Forsyth, who had been a Hakim in this Province for upwards of twenty years, who is remembered with esteem in every part of the country where he served, whom people throughout the country regard as their well wisher and friend, who had spent a greater part of his life in improving and doing good to the country, and whose good intentions are well known, is so heavy a stroke for us that we cannot fully express ourselves.

We, the undersigned Rajahs, Sàrdars, Raises, and subjects of Government, with great respect and with joined hands, pray that, considering the rebellious conduct of the Kukas and the good intentions of Messrs. Cowan and Forsyth in the action taken by them for the protection of our country from ruin, the Government be pleased to modify the order passed by them for the future prosperity of the country.

Rajah Hamidullah Khan, of Rajauri, Hoshiarpur,
Amin Chand, Rais of Bijwarah, ditto.
Pandit Hari Shankar, Extra Assistant, ditto.

Sheoparshad, Tahsildar, ditto.

and 140 others, Zaildars, Lambardars, etc., of the Hoshiarpur District.

22nd June 1872.—The above paper having been laid before a committee held by the Sodhis and Raises of Anundpur, which was attended by about 500 persons, the meeting unanimously concurred in the views and opinion of the Hoshiarpur Anjaman, and stated that the punishment inflicted on the Kukas was just and appropriate; for it is believed that had they not been punished, they would have raised a great disturbance somewhere afterwards.

Bedi Sujan Singh,

Jaimal Singh, Member, Municipal Committee,

Lachmandas, Superintendent of Settlement, Pargunah Unah,

and 40 others, Zaildars, Sahukars, etc., of Unah.

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INDEX

Genealogical Table

